

Barnard Archives and Special Collections
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Collection Development Policy

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A. Introduction

As a repository of records of the life of Barnard College and broader feminist histories, we provide a space for critical, interdisciplinary inquiry into the past as well as the imagination of possible futures. We contribute to the College's mission of intellectual risk-taking and discovery and our shared responsibility to address issues of gender in all their complexity and urgency.

The mission of the Barnard Archives is pedagogical at its foundation. We collaborate with Barnard students, staff, alums, faculty, administrators, and other members of the Barnard College and Columbia University communities, as well as with a global community of researchers, activists, and artists. We collect records documenting college history and the lives of students, alums, faculty, and staff from founding to present day, as well as special

collections that document feminist histories.

This policy is informed by reparative and redistributive frameworks to actively confront histories of exclusion and displacement of people with marginalized identities within our collections. We are grateful to the thinking and scholarship of archivists, librarians, memory workers, and archival scholars including but not limited to Vani Natarajan, Jen Brown, Miriam Neptune, Madiha Choski, Jenna Freedman, Holly Smith, Lae'l Hughes-Watkins, Elvia Arroyo-Ramirez, Linda M. Perkins, Jarrett Drake, Bergis Jules, Michelle Caswell, the members of We Here and Archivistas en Espanglish, the staff of the Smith College special collections, and the staff of the John Hay Library for shaping our work. Archives Directors, Martha Tenney and Obden Mondésir, wrote this 2023 iteration of the policy, with contributions from the Barnard Library Collections Strategy team, Miriam Neptune, Jenna Freedman, Monica McCormick, and the 2022-2023 Archives graduate fellow cohort; the policy retains text from previous iterations, including contributions from previous Archives Director Shannon O'Neill and previous graduate fellow cohorts.

B. Principles of Collection Development

Equity and Repair

The staff of the Barnard Archives commits to collecting work that is equitable, anti-oppressive, and centers voices, knowledge, and memory-making practices historically excluded from the archival record. Our collection development is informed by reparative and redistributive frameworks to actively confront histories of exclusion and allow users to see themselves in the archives.

Examples of this principle in action: in recent years, we have partnered with and compensated students and other donors of materials to build oral history collections and other documentation that address gaps and silences in existing archival materials at Barnard. Collections resulting from these partnerships include the Hawa Tunkara '21 FLI Story Collection and the Gender* in the Archives Collection.

Access and Abolition

We collect materials so that they can be used by all. The Barnard Archives and Special Collections are open to all researchers, and the staff of the Archives strive to make our collections as accessible as possible, by removing economic and other barriers to collections for both in-person and remote researchers. We prioritize a welcoming environment instead of surveillance or credentialing of users. We strive to build an abolitionist future from the present, after Ruth Wilson Gilmore.¹

¹ Wilson, Gilmore Ruth. "[Making Abolition Geography in California's Central Valley.](#)" Interview conducted by Léopold Lambert. *The Funambulist: Politics of Space and Bodies*(2019): 1419.

In action: Read more about the ways that we provide access [on our website](#).

Privacy

Barnard Archives value the privacy of records creators and subjects as well as the right to refuse inclusion within the archives. We are also committed to researcher privacy.

In action: More information about our restrictions policies can be found in the section of this document on [Access and Restrictions](#), along with guidance to donors about third party materials in the section on [Gifts, Transfers, and Acquisitions](#). Read more about commitments to and transparency about researcher privacy [on our website](#).

Networks of Care and Affective Responsibilities

We recognize, in Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor's terms, our affective responsibilities to records creators, subjects, users, and communities (as well as to our staff and other archivists) and strive to approach these relationships with an ethic of care.

In action: We understand our responsibilities to collect and represent inclusive histories alongside a consideration of those records and relationships that we already maintain. In practice, this can mean that we may turn down new collections because we have ongoing commitments and relationships with previous donors; or that we prioritize processing or promoting collections that align with our collection development emphases and principles. We also keep these networks of care and affective responsibilities in mind as we balance reasonable restrictions imposed on records to protect privacy with our commitments to access.

C. Collections Development Emphases, Strengths, and Areas

Emphases

Throughout the collecting areas below, we aim to build collections that speak to one or more of these emphases:

Pedagogical Connections

Barnard's archives are teaching collections, and we aim to collect materials which will be used in teaching, learning, and research across the curriculum (and in extra-curricular uses) at Barnard.

Local Contexts

We actively seek collections that document New York City histories (as well as connections to global diasporas through the lens of the city), as an important geographic location for feminist and social justice work and thought.

Broad Access and Use

We are committed to providing broad access to our collections through description, digitization, teaching, exhibits, programming, and welcoming reference service (see our [Access and Abolition](#) Principle of Collection Development) and aim to build collections that invite many uses, including academic research, artmaking, activism and organizing, exhibition, and programming for Barnard communities.

Partnerships and Collaborative Collection Building

We are lucky to work closely with the [Barnard Center for Research on Women \(BCRW\)](#), the [Barnard Zine Library](#), the Barnard Library Collections Strategy team, and other campus partners whose networks, collections or programming emphases, and approaches influence our collection-building.

BCRW and the Archives share a long history of collection building and collaboration: Barnard library and archives staff were involved in the creation and early shaping of the Birdie Goldsmith Ast Resource Collection of the Barnard College Women's Center (now known as the [BCRW Feminist Ephemera Collection](#) and the [BCRW Historical Periodicals Collection](#)) and collaborated on collection development and access to collections throughout BCRW's existence. In 2018, archivists transferred BCRW's [distinct research collections](#) to the new Milstein Center location of the archives for preservation and access, where they complement the [institutional records of BCRW's history](#) and many other collections relating to feminist histories but retain a distinct record group and collection ID prefix (BCRW), signifying the work of BCRW staff to build and maintain these collections. BCRW and Archives staff continue a vital partnership that extends to collection-building and programming, through the deep activist and scholarly networks cultivated by BCRW staff.

Zine Library staff independently curate and catalog zines in the Zine Library and work together with Archives staff to provide access to zines housed in the archives (which complement the thousands of zines available in the open stacks of the Barnard Library). Archives staff also collaborate with Zine Library staff in [building collections documenting the creative processes, networks, and lives of zinesters](#) and in programming, including the Barnard Library's annual research awards.

The Barnard Library Collections Strategy team (composed of selectors for the circulating collections of the library) works together with Archives staff to set collections priorities and collaboratively shape archival, special, and circulating collections. This includes providing feedback on potential archives acquisitions (based on familiarity with Barnard teaching and research); discussing shared collections priorities and directions; shaping circulating collections that are complementary to archival collections; collaboratively building capacity for purchases of archival collections; and contributing to description and outreach to promote the use of

archival collections.

Strengths

Across the collecting areas noted below, and in addition to the history of Barnard College, collection strengths and areas we are prioritizing for strategic growth include:

Feminist authors, with a growing focus on writers of color

Core collections include the [Ntozake Shange Papers](#), the [Annie Nathan Meyer Papers](#), the [Jeannette Mirsky Papers](#), and the [Alice Duer Miller Papers](#).

Feminist study and struggle, with a focus on abolitionist and collective action

Core collections include the [Barnard Center for Research on Women records](#), the [Coalition for Women Prisoners Coalition](#), the [Christine E. Bose Wages for Housework Research Collection](#), the [Mirra Komarovsky Papers](#), the [Sherry Suttles Papers](#), and the [Barnard Organization of Soul and Solidarity \(B.O.S.S.\) Records](#).

New York City feminist arts scenes and communities

Core collections include the [Sabra Moore NYC Women's Art Movement Collection](#), the [Dianne Smith Papers](#), and the [Freda Leinwand Collection](#).

Legal battles for reproductive justice and civil rights in the U.S.

Core collections include the [Maggie Leigh Groff Abortion Control Act Records](#), the [Kathryn Kolbert Planned Parenthood v. Casey Records](#), and the [Shirley A. Siegel Papers](#).

Zinemaking and feminist publishing networks

Core collections include preservation copies from the [Barnard Zine Library](#) (curated by Zine Library staff), associated [zinester ephemera collections](#), and the [Barnard Center for Research on Women Historical Periodicals](#) and [Feminist Ephemera](#) collections.

Areas

Personal and Professional Papers of Barnard Alums

We collect the personal and professional papers of graduates (and people who attended Barnard) who have made contributions to feminist worldmaking in the arts, scholarship, and organizing.

We are especially interested in collecting materials that tell stories that are not already well-represented in our current holdings, including collections that document the lives of Black, Indigenous, and alums of color; LGBTQ alums; working class and poor alums; and/or disabled alums. Collections in the Barnard Archives are over-representative of white, upper-middle class, able-bodied, and heteronormative alum experiences, and we are actively seeking to redress gaps in our collecting—this includes proactively pursuing collections as well as turning down some offers of collections.

Highly desired types of documentation (these examples are meant to provide guidance and are not exhaustive) include:

Personal reflections on life and work, including scrapbooks, diaries and journals, blogs, manifestos, recordings of conversations and oral histories

Documentation of networks that have impacted the lives of alums, including correspondence (both professional and personal) and social media

Documentation of creative and other work processes, including drafts and manuscripts, sketches, preparatory statements or research notes

Evidence of significant events in the lives of alums, including photographs, moving images, realia, memorabilia, and ephemera, and rare published materials (e.g. small print run magazines, zines, sound/video recordings)

Materials we do not collect:

Books not authored by the donor and other widely available published materials (including but not limited to films and documentaries, newspaper clippings, and magazines and academic journals)

Awards

Collected artworks

Research files, including copies of widely available materials

Personal and Professional Papers of Barnard Faculty and Staff

We collect materials that document the lives of College faculty and staff, particularly those who have made major contributions to feminist scholarship and/or organizing or the life of the College.

The staff of the Barnard Archives are especially interested in collecting materials that tell stories not well-represented in our current holdings, including collections that document the lives of Black, Indigenous, and faculty/staff of color; LGBTQ faculty/staff; working class and poor faculty/staff; and/or disabled faculty/staff. New and growing areas of collecting include the lives of staff and staff issues (both unionized and non-unionized staff) and the papers of staff and faculty of color.

Highly desired types of documentation include (these examples are meant to provide guidance and are not exhaustive):

Biographical material, including resumes, bibliographies, biographical sketches and memoirs

Correspondence, both professional and personal

Lecture notes and syllabi

Drafts or manuscripts of published books and articles

Photographs, notebooks, appointment calendars, and memorabilia

Recordings of unique lectures and speeches (not including classroom instruction)

Recordings of conversations and oral histories, particularly those relating to college history

For official records of the college, including committee records, see section C3, Records and Publications of Barnard College

Materials we do not collect:

Books not authored by the donor and other widely available published materials (including but not limited to films and documentaries, newspaper clippings, and magazines and academic journals)

Research files, including copies of widely available materials

Graded student work and theses

Records and Publications of Barnard College

College records are documents generated or received by the administration (inclusive of the Board of Trustees, President's Office, Provost's Office, Deans Offices); administrative offices (inclusive of the Library and Academic Centers; student services and administrative services); academic departments/programs, the faculty, and faculty committees; student government, student clubs, and informal student formations; records of student life at Barnard; and publications of any of these constituencies.

The Barnard Archives and Special Collections collect College records and publications that have historical value; retention of records for legal purposes is outside of the purview of the Archives.

Highly desired types of documentation (these examples are meant to provide guidance and are not exhaustive) include:

Records of student organizations, clubs, activist formations, and students' lives

Correspondence, minutes, memoranda, and reports of the Board of Trustees

Records of the Office of President including, correspondence, administrative subject

files, speeches, and program and departmental reports

Correspondence, administrative subject files and reports of offices that are central to the College administration including: Provost, College Relations, General Counsel, Finance, Campus Services, Student Life, Communications, and Development

Correspondence, administrative subject files and reports of Deans, Directors, and Administrators of the divisions, services, programs, and institutes of the College

Minutes, memoranda, syllabi, and reports of all academic departments

Reports of the Admissions Office

Records of the Registrar including enrollment reports, graduation rosters, and class schedules

Minutes and records of the Alum Association

Accreditation reports and supporting documentation

Annual budgets and audit reports

Documentation of significant awards, events, and celebrations

All publications, newsletters, booklets, and other media distributed in the name of Barnard College or by Barnard students for a primarily college audience including, but not limited to: catalogs, calendars, bulletins, yearbooks, student publications, faculty/staff/administration newsletters, and alum publications

Photographic prints, negatives, slides, film, tapes, reels, oral history interviews, and other media documenting the College

Maps, prints, and architectural renderings that depict the development of the College

Artifacts relating to the history of Barnard College with significant documentary value

In keeping with the legal parameters of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the staff of Barnard Archives and Special Collections does not collect academic records; this includes grades and student work, inclusive of student theses. We recommend that students and alums deposit their theses in the Columbia University Libraries [Academic Commons repository](#).

Records produced by the offices and departments of Barnard College may only be transferred to the Archives once those records are no longer in active use (that is, past the period when they continue to be used with sufficient frequency to justify keeping them in the office of creation). Office and departmental records that have been transferred to the Archives cannot be recalled, and are subject to the same terms of use and reproduction as other collections

within the Barnard Archives and Special Collections. Records that are transferred to the Barnard Archives and Special Collections that do not fit the Archives' mission will not be retained. Materials noted as permanently restricted in the section on [Access and Restrictions](#) will be destroyed. Archivists can share details on selecting and preparing records for transfer from college records at the request of college staff, faculty, students, and administration.

Special Collections

We acquire collections that are not created by individuals or entities affiliated with Barnard College, but that are related to broader feminist histories—particularly those which align with our [collecting emphases](#), such as local contexts/New York City histories, and existing [collection strengths](#), such as feminist study and struggle with a focus on abolitionist and collective action. We prioritize collecting materials created by Black, Indigenous, and people of color; LGBTQ people; poor and working class people; and disabled people. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- The professional and personal collections of individuals who have made contributions to feminist study and praxis and struggles for LGBTQ rights, with a particular focus on New York City histories

- The records of organizations that have made significant contributions to feminist struggles, particularly those engaged in abolitionist and anti-carceral struggle, the New York City feminist arts scene and communities, and documentation of struggles for reproductive justice.

- Additions to the Barnard Zine Library, maintained and curated by the Zine Library staff, along with zinester ephemera and correspondence collections

Highly desired types of documentation (these examples are meant to provide guidance and are not exhaustive) include:

- Personal reflections on life and work, including scrapbooks, diaries and journals, blogs, recordings of conversations and oral histories

- Documentation of networks that have impacted the donor(s), including correspondence (both professional and personal) and social media

- Documentation of creative and other work processes, including drafts and manuscripts, sketches, preparatory statements or research notes

- Evidence of significant events, including photographs, moving images, realia, memorabilia, and ephemera, and rare published materials (e.g. small print run magazines, zines, sound/video recordings)

Materials we do not collect:

- Books not authored by the donor and other widely available published materials (including but not limited to films and documentaries, newspaper clippings, and

magazines and academic journals)

Awards (including statuettes, trophies, plaques, etc.)

Collected artworks

Research files, including copies of widely available materials

For more detail, see our collecting [Emphases](#), [Strengths](#), and [Selection](#) sections.

D. Selection

The primary responsibility for identifying and proposing the purchase or arranging the donation of collections lies with the Directors of Archives and Special Collections in consultation with the Dean of BLAIS, subject specialists in the Library, staff of the Barnard Center for Research on Women and the Barnard Zine Library, and other experts or anticipated users. Because acquiring collections constitutes a long-term commitment to preservation and immediate commitments of resources for accessioning, preservation, and processing, we carefully consider acquisitions.

Materials may be selected for acquisition into the Barnard Archives and Special Collections when they meet the following criteria:

The materials fit into one or more of our [collecting areas](#), and align with one or more of our collecting [emphases](#) and/or [strengths](#).

The materials and agreements around their use align with our [collection development principles](#).

In consultation with subject specialists in the Library and/or other experts or anticipated users, Archives staff have determined that the materials have anticipated use.

We can responsibly accept the materials and fulfill needs for stabilization, processing, preservation, and access.

In general, we aim to not duplicate collecting efforts of other institutions or needlessly split closely related records (or records from the same creator) that researchers would better access at a single institution.

We select materials within the scope outlined in this document, regardless of format: we collect paper (inclusive of manuscript materials, photographs, published materials), all digital formats, and all audiovisual formats. We may not be able to provide immediate access to all digital formats or all audiovisual formats because of the unique transfer needs for these materials and limitations in our funding for their transfer. We collect but are extremely selective when accepting material culture and three-dimensional objects because of the unique

storage and preservation needs associated with these formats.

We do not seek personal book collections. In some cases, when the book collection is small and significant—and is tied to a simultaneous manuscript donation—we may consider acquiring a book collection. We are also not actively seeking to acquire art collections, although artwork as a part of a larger collection may be considered. We do not collect awards (trophies, statuettes, plaques, etc.).

For collections that we do not accept, we will make an effort to provide creators with alternative repositories to contact.

E. Gifts, Transfers, and Acquisitions

Modes of collecting currently include gifts of records, transfer from college offices and departments, and, in select circumstances, acquisitions of high significance for the Archives and Special Collections through purchase.

The general process for acquisitions is as follows:

All acquisitions of materials are governed by a deed of gift, an oral history deed of gift, a transfer record (for Barnard College materials), or a sale agreement. Deeds of gift and sale agreements include a title transfer and terms determining the management of the materials, access, copyright, deaccessioning, and electronic records. Sale agreements additionally outline the sale price and payment method. Archives staff and creators will review these documents together to understand each others' expectations and will reflect these expectations in this documentation. Donations of oral histories must be accompanied by an oral history deed of gift, or another release/permissions form approved by the Director of Archives and Special Collections.

To allow us to make informed decisions, we may ask for more information about proposed acquisitions. This can take the form of an inventory, a visit, or other agreed upon methods. We will ask for specific information about any materials that may need to be restricted (for donor or third-party privacy, or for legal reasons) and any preservation concerns about the materials. When materials created by third parties are known to be present in collections being donated, the staff of the Barnard Archives may ask donors for additional information about provenance and permissions and to consider the right to privacy of third parties represented in their collections. If possible, we may ask donors to discuss these materials with those affected by their inclusion.

When choosing materials to donate or sell to the Archives and Special Collections, we encourage donors to consider:

- The context of the records: how and why they were created, what they meant to the

creator, and how this is communicated

- The evidence contained in the records: we are likely to collect materials that can tell users something significant about the lives of their creators, and we aim to maintain the methods of organization relevant to their creators
- The uniqueness of the records: we collect materials created by donors, or, in a more limited way, the materials collected by donors that were influential and are difficult to find; we are less likely to collect widely-available materials, clippings, etc.

Before transfer of records, we may ask donors to stabilize materials (for example gathering papers into folders, gathering digital materials, labeling audiovisual materials). We may also ask for materials such as oral histories to be transcribed or time coded prior to transfer. We ask that creators do not attempt to rearrange, digitize, or reformat materials before transfer (this is because the way that creators have organized their materials may share important information about them—for archivists as well as for researchers). The Archives and Special Collections will generally manage the secure digital or physical transfer of materials to the archives.

We will provide a letter acknowledging the receipt of donated materials. The Internal Revenue Service has determined that Barnard College is organized and operated exclusively for educational purposes and is exempt from federal income tax pursuant to Section 501(a) and (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Barnard College does not advise donors on tax matters and suggests that the donor direct any questions regarding donations as charitable contributions to the donor's tax advisor or an office of the Internal Revenue Service. Barnard College does not appraise donations but will make the materials available for appraisal upon the request of the donor.

Within collections, we select materials that we determine to have research value and may remove some materials that we determine does not have significant research value to our users, as well as duplicates and materials that are permanently restricted according to the [section below on Access and Restrictions](#). Donors may choose to have these materials returned to them.

We also hope for archives relationships with donors to extend past the point of donation and invite continued engagement—through donor-led description of their own collections, participation in programming or teaching related to collections, or other points of contact with archives staff and users.

F. Access and Restrictions

The staff of the Barnard Archives and Special Collections is dedicated to providing equitable service to all researchers and access to all of its holdings to the fullest extent possible, as determined by staffing and the legal agreements that govern acquisitions. We do not restrict

unprocessed collections and strive to make restrictions and the justification for these restrictions transparent to researchers. Materials will be described soon after acquisition, and may be accessed both in-person in the reading room and online (via digitization on demand, remote reference appointments, and/or making materials available online pursuant to legal agreements governing the acquisition).

With our commitment to access in mind, we also recognize any third party privacy concerns in regards to sensitive identity information. We recognize the rights of faculty, students, alums, and other donors to impose reasonable restrictions to protect privacy. We also maintain these policies for legal and archives-imposed restrictions and will work with donors to identify these materials in their collections:

- A. Student educational records (including grades and letters of recommendation) are governed by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, as amended, and are restricted for seventy-five years from the date of creation.
- B. Personnel records relating to Barnard faculty and staff (including search, review, promotion, tenure, and disciplinary/grievance records) are restricted for seventy-five years from the date of creation.
- C. Records of the Board of Trustees and its committees (including meeting minutes) are restricted for twenty years from the date of creation.
- D. Financial records and records relating to donors and donations are restricted for twenty-five years from the date of creation.
- E. Medical records, patient/client files, and any sensitive, personally-identifiable information (including social security numbers, bank account numbers, and credit card numbers) are permanently restricted and may be marked for deaccession or redaction at the discretion of the archivist.
- F. Records of the above types, even where located in otherwise unrestricted collections, are still considered restricted following the same policies.