

NWT Archives

Documentation Framework

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Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
1. Archives Act.....	2
2. Strategic Objectives	2
3. Archival Appraisal Criteria	3
Territorial Significance Criteria.....	3
Standard Appraisal Criteria.....	4
4. Addressing Our Gaps - Northwest Territories' Sectors	5
Identifying Northwest Territories Sectors	5
Appraising Activities within Northwest Territories Sectors - Analysis Reports.....	6
5. Communicating Our Documentation Priorities	7
6. Expected Outcomes	8
7. Tracking Our Success	9

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this document is to outline a Documentation Framework for the Northwest Territories Archives. The NWT Archives seeks to improve the representation of Northwest Territories society in its holdings by establishing core principles of acquisition policy and objectives for the NWT Archives; to identify those activities and categories within the public and private sectors which hold territorial significance, and; to effectively communicate these objectives to our stakeholders and the public.

A Documentation Framework for the NWT Archives will support both targeted acquisition efforts as well as serving as a filter for unsolicited offers of donation.

A core component of the Framework is an effective communication strategy to promote the NWT Archives' acquisition priorities and to promote the NWT Archives as an appropriate place for the donation of records of territorial significance.

The NWT Archives would like to acknowledge and thank the Archives of Ontario for permitting us to use and rework their July 2014 Acquisitions Strategy in the formation of this document.

1. Archives Act

The NWT Archives receives its mandate from the Archives Act. The *Archives Act (RSNWT 1988, c.A-6)* establishes:

5. (1) Subject to the regulations, a government body shall transfer every public record that is held by it or under its control to the Archivist within 30 years after the date on which the record came into existence.

7. (1) The Archivist may acquire by gift, bequest, loan or purchase or in any other similar manner, and place in the Archives, any pamphlet, map, chart, manuscript, paper, book, photograph or other documentary material regardless of physical form or characteristic, having any bearing on the history of the Territories.

2. Strategic Objectives

This Documentation Framework seeks to align with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment's Culture and Heritage division's objectives in several key areas:

Mission

The NWT Archives' mission is to acquire, preserve and make accessible records that document the history of the Northwest Territories. These archival functions are performed in accordance with professional codes of ethics and to national and international standards of the archives profession.

Values: Diversity

The NWT Archives seeks to foster and promote diversity in the records we keep in our collection. The Documentation Framework supports this value by targeting collections that reflect the diversity of society in the Northwest Territories.

Priorities: Communicating our role

The NWT Archives seeks to promote its role in documenting NWT society. Greater awareness of this mission will stimulate access to the resources of the NWT Archives. The effective communication of the Documentation Framework within the Government of the Northwest Territories, with stakeholder groups and the public will help to extend this reach by encouraging northerners to see a reflection of themselves in the documentary memory of Northwest Territories.

3. Archival Appraisal Criteria

This section outlines the criteria by which all potential acquisitions are assessed. Decisions to acquire records are based on the following appraisal criteria:

- Territorial Significance Criteria
- Standard Appraisal Criteria

Territorial Significance Criteria

Territorial significance is the primary criterion for determining the NWT Archives' acquisition of records. A potential donation should demonstrate territorial significance before being considered as a candidate for acquisition.

In the context of archival appraisal, territorial significance can be defined as records that have lasting meaning and importance for the people of the Northwest Territories. When applied to appraisal, it acts as a lens that allows the Archives to acquire donations that best document the history of the territory.

Records of territorial significance document life in Northwest Territories. They record the activities and experiences of individuals, groups, organizations, corporate bodies, and other groups that are territorially recognized. They document events and trends (e.g., cultural, political, economic, social, demographic, scientific, and religious) that have a broad territorial scope.

The NWT has strong regional traditions and histories. The NWT Archives strives to reflect an appropriate level of representation reflecting the variety of regions and the diversity of territorial society. We recognize that the NWT Archives is the only professionally-staffed archives in the NWT. However, other repositories in the NWT have holdings of regional and local value, and these are considered when evaluating whether a donation is appropriate for acquisition at the NWT Archives.

Key factors considered when assessing a donation for territorial significance include:

- Has the individual or organization contributed a significant role in the cultural, political, social, demographic, scientific, economic or religious life of the NWT?
- Has the individual or organization had a significant impact on the development or evolution of the NWT?
- Has the individual or organization operated in several areas or regions throughout the NWT? If not, was it influential beyond the locality in which it operated?
- Are the records representative of an important, unique, or unusual function or activity?
- Has the individual or organization played a pioneering or leadership role in its field?
- Are the records associated with a noteworthy individual or other organization?

- Do the records document significant events and trends in the NWT? (e.g., cultural, political, economic, social, demographic, scientific, and religious)?

Standard Appraisal Criteria

These criteria will be considered once the territorial significance has been determined:

- Does the potential donation complement the NWT Archives' existing government or private holdings in a meaningful way?
- Is the NWT Archives the most appropriate repository?
- Is the potential donation a complete fonds? Are records from that individual or organization already held by another institution?
- Is the potential donation a comprehensive fonds (how comprehensively do the records document the subject / individual / function).
- Is the provenance of the potential donation known?
- Does the potential donation require additional resources or technical expertise (preservation, reformatting, digital storage, etc.)?
- Is the potential donation in a usable format? (i.e. are they in a format we can access and preserve)
- Is the information available from another source in a more stable or accessible format?
- Do the records consist of originals, or are they copies of original records held by another source?
- Will ownership be wholly transferred to the NWT Archives? Are there intellectual property or copyright issues with the material?

4. Addressing Our Gaps - Northwest Territories' Sectors

While it is through the standard appraisal criteria that the NWT Archives will review offers of potential donation, it is through a review of Northwest Territories' sectors that we will establish our highest acquisition priorities.

The NWT Archives aims to be proactive in the identification of areas of acquisition priority. Through a combined assessment of gaps within our existing holdings and a review of government priorities in conjunction with societal trends, the Archives will conduct analyses of sectors of Northwest Territories society in order to identify areas of acquisition priority.

Developing a strong knowledge of high priority areas will enable the NWT Archives to pursue the records of individuals and organizations whose records may be potentially available when such opportunities are of a timely essence. Examples may include knowledge of retirements, or the closure of significant organizations, etc.

Identifying Northwest Territories Sectors

The NWT Archives is working to identify Northwest Territories' major societal sectors, and the various sub-sectors and activities within them, in order to discover gaps in the Archives' holdings. This list possibly includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Agriculture
- Business and Industry
- Community Services
- Consumer Services
- Culture
- Education
- Energy
- Environment
- Health
- Infrastructure
- Labour
- Natural resources
- Religion
- Regions
- Science and Technology
- Sports and Tourism
- Transportation

Appraising Activities within Northwest Territories Sectors - Analysis Reports

Sectors identified as a priority, and their related sub-sectors and sub-categories, will be assessed according to the following guidelines.

The resulting reports will assess the value of documenting activities / sectors / sub-sectors, and may also be used to assist in the identification of records of specific individuals, organizations and companies when appropriate.

Sector Identification

Definition and scope of the sector and its significance within the territory.

Sub-sector / Category Identification

Identification of sub-sectors and categories within each sector.

Sub-sector / Category Description

Overview of the scope of the sub-sector or category and a description of the types of the bodies, organizations and groups fall within it.

Functional Linkages

When appraising the territorial significance of activities in the private sector which have been established by or are subject to governing or regulatory legislation, it may be useful to examine private sector activities in relation to government functions in order to identify complementary activities and relationships.

It can be valuable to apply similar analysis and methodology to acquisition in both the government and private collecting areas. This helps to identify areas where important functions and activities happen in all of society. Functions that have been identified as core functions of a department or government sector are also likely to be significant in the corresponding private sector.

Related holdings

The Archives will conduct an analysis of its existing holdings within each thematic sector. This analysis will help to identify gaps in the Archives' holdings.

Sub-sector / Category Appraisal Rationale

An appraisal rationale is prepared for each sub-sector / category, explaining the extent to which documentation within this sub-sector would be of territorial significance and warrants acquisition by the Archives.

Priority

Based upon the sub-sector appraisal rationale, state whether the priority for acquisition is "High", "Medium" or "Low".

5. Communicating Our Documentation Priorities

The NWT Archives will communicate the Documentation Framework in an accessible manner.

Promotion of the Documentation Framework will include:

- communication via the NWT Archives website;
- production of a refreshed brochure for donations;
- greater integration of donation and acquisition priorities into stakeholder communications; and,
- pursuing opportunities with stakeholders, liaison groups and sectors identified within the Sector Analysis Reports to further distribute our acquisition priorities.

Communicating the goals and objectives of the Documentation Framework through existing and new channels will serve to reach new and diverse audiences and will further position the NWT Archives as an appropriate place for records of territorial significance.

6. Expected Outcomes

The Documentation Framework will result in improvements at the NWT Archives, specifically:

- Improved consistency in appraisal decisions;
- Improved linkages and consistency in related archival function decision making;
- Greater representation of the many sectors that make up Northwest Territories society; and,
- Greater representation of Northwest Territories' diverse cultural groups.

Proactive Filtering

Through a combined assessment of the existing holdings of the NWT Archives, and an awareness of the collecting mandates of other Northwest Territories and Canadian archives, the Documentation Framework will naturally serve as a screen through which unsolicited donation offers can be assessed more systematically.

Those offers of donation that fall within target areas that archivists have identified as low in priority (e.g. sufficiently documented or that are actively collected by other archives) can be appraised more efficiently. Such prospective donors could be referred to more appropriate repositories.

7. Tracking Our Success

When the NWT Archives acquires collections which fall within identified collecting priority areas, these will be identified, tracked and reported as successful outcomes of the Documentation Framework.

The NWT Archives will track new acquisitions against the appraisal of targeted Northwest Territories sectors and sub-sectors.

These acquisitions can also be featured on the website within the “Donating to the Archives” section, which will help to both promote the successes as well as to serve as a possible enticement to other prospective donors.