

Archives Policy

(Approved by the Trustees April 2, 2002)

Statement of Access to Archives

The Archives functions as a repository for Needham historical materials. These materials may include items from town departments and committees, as required by Section 2.8.2 of the Town's General By-Laws, and from individuals, businesses, civic organizations, institutions, etc., as well as published materials with an abiding historical interest to the town.

The Needham Free Public Library Archives is committed to making research materials available to users on equal terms of access. This is in accordance with the standard professional policy on access adopted jointly by the Society of American Archivists and the American Library Association. Equal access does not mean that all materials are open to research use. It is the responsibility of the Needham Free Public Library Archives to balance the researcher's need for access with the needs for confidentiality of persons and institutions whose activities are reflected in the material. Consequently, the use of some materials in the Needham Free Public Library Archives, especially those of recent date, may be subject to restrictions.

Two types of restrictions exist. Restrictions on access that apply to more than one group of materials are termed 'general restrictions.' They are applicable to particular kinds of information or designated classes of materials, wherever they may be found among the holdings. The other kind of restrictions are known as "special restrictions." These are restrictions specified by the transferring agency or donor and apply to a specific body of material, sometimes for a specific length of time. Information about specific restrictions will be found in the accessioning dossier that cover the body of material to which the specific restriction applies. (For a fuller explanation, see the General Restriction Statement.)

1. It is the responsibility of the Archives:
 - a. To make available to qualified researchers, officials and townspeople, on equal terms of access, research materials in the collection, unless prohibited by restrictions by the donor.
 - b. To inform the researchers of the collections in the library's custody through a public catalog (card or computer), published finding guides or other finding aids.
 - c. To provide staff to assist researchers, though such staff will not be expected to engage in extended research on their behalf.

2. In order to protect and insure continued accessibility of the material in its custody, the Archives may impose conditions which it will public or otherwise make available to users. (For a further explanation, see the General Restriction Statement.)
 - a. All materials must be used in accordance with repository regulations governing access and use of materials.
 - b. As a protection to the collections, the Archives will require acceptable identification of persons wishing to use the materials, as well as their signature indicating they have read a statement defining the policies and regulations of the repository.
 - c. The Archives may refuse access to unprocessed materials.
 - d. The Archives may restrict use of fragile or unusually valuable materials.
 - e. The Archives will not send research materials for use outside the archives; however, under special circumstances a collection, or a portion of it, may be loaned or placed on deposit with another institution.
 - f. The Archives may refuse access to an individual researcher who, in the opinion of the staff, has demonstrated carelessness or deliberate destructiveness as to endanger the safety of the material, or who has refused to comply with the regulations of the repository.
 - g. The Archives will restrict access to materials which in its judgement, contain information the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy or a libel of a living person.
 - h. The Archives is dedicated to making materials available for research and, although some restrictions occasionally apply, researchers are always free to petition for access.
3. The Archives will make available to researchers a suggested form citation crediting the repository and identifying items within the collection for later reference. Citations to copies of the originals that are in other repositories will include the location of the originals, if known.
4. The Archives will advise researchers that they have sole responsibility for securing permission to publish from unpublished manuscripts in which intellectual property rights are retained, or to publish extensive quotations from copyrighted works. Manuscripts cannot be used for publication without due regard to common law rights, literary rights, property rights, and libel laws. The user assumes legal responsibility for observing these rights. If asked, the repository will inform the researcher the researcher of any known retention of literary rights.
5. The Archives will not deny access to materials, or grant exclusive use of materials to any person or persons, or conceal the existence of any material from researchers, unless required to do so by law, donor or purchase stipulations, or other compelling factors.

6. With exception of the fee for copying materials, the Archives will not charge fees for the non-commercial use for the collections.
7. The Archives is committed to preserving manuscript and archival materials and to make them available for research as soon as possible. At all same time, it is recognized that every repository has certain obligations to protect confidentiality in its records in accordance with law, and that every private donor has the right to impose reasonable restrictions on his papers to protect confidentiality for a reasonable length of time. (For a fuller explanation, see the General Restriction Statement.)
 - a. The Archives will inform researchers of the restrictions that apply to the individual collections or record groups
 - b. The Archives will discourage donors from imposing unreasonable restrictions and will encourage a specific time limitation on all restrictions.
 - c. The Archives will periodically re-evaluate restrictions and work toward providing free access to materials.