**Shelby White and Leon Levy Archives Center**

**Collection Development Policy Draft**

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**Shelby White and Leon Levy Archives Center Mission**The Shelby White and Leon Levy Archives Center documents, collects, and sustains the history of the Institute for Advanced Study. We provide equitable access to the diverse stories at the center of Institute life in order to inspire a creative and critical engagement with our past and to promote the value of advanced research for our collective future. We are committed to creating inclusive programming that connects the work of the Institute with the global community we serve.

**Introduction**

The Shelby White and Leon Levy Archives Center serves as an institutional home for collective memory at the Institute for Advanced Study. We welcome researchers and interested individuals from across the world into the Institute for Advanced Study to engage with the material legacy of the scholars who have found refuge on the Institute grounds.

We serve the broader mission of the Institute for Advanced Study by supporting research that seeks to “push beyond” the limitations of the past and look forward to the future of advanced scholarship. We document, collect, and sustain the history of our Institute and Faculty and provide a pathway for those who might ‘carry on’ the intellectual endeavors of our scholars. For those outside of the academic community, we provide equitable access and inclusive programming that demonstrates the value of advanced research to a global community.

**Purpose**

This Collection Development Policy was created by the Archivist at the Institute for Advanced Study in order to:

* outline the positionality and values that guide our collecting and stewardship practices transparently for both the creators and potential users of our collections;
* establish the history and scope of our collection to create a sustainable basis for ethical maintenance and development of our holdings; and
* identify the communities of individuals and institutions whose histories and whose futures are bound to our collections and our collecting practices moving forward.

**Guiding Values**The Shelby White and Leon Levy Archives Center is committed to collecting practices that affirm the value and dignity of the individuals who create, claim, and engage with the historic collections we sustain. We acknowledge that collecting practices can be wielded as a hegemonic tool to establish which histories must be valued and sustained and which histories can be discarded and erased, and additionally which individuals hold the power to manage and authorize historic facts. In adopting these guiding values, we hope to address structural injustices which inevitably result from collecting in ways that are primarily extractive and exploitative of creators, users, and communities impacted by the archives.   
  
Our values are as follows.

1. **We respect the agency and autonomy of the individuals who create collections in the broadest sense.** We recognize a definition of ‘creator,’ in line with archival standards, that extends to those who create and accumulate materials as well as to archival workers themselves. At the same time, we acknowledge that this may be an inadequate framework that elides the accumulation of property (e.g. ownership) with authorship, sustaining a historic framework that privileges wealth and disenfranchises those who have been displaced and dispossessed. We recognize the agency and autonomy not just of those who ‘create’ collections in a narrow sense but also of those whose work and identity is necessarily imbricated in networks of collecting.

We commit to a practice that values the agency, autonomy, and dignity of these individuals and that seeks to destabilize the primacy of property and ownership as the basis for collecting.

1. **We acknowledge the need for accountable and transparent stewardship practices.** As archivists, we understand that stewardship and maintenance are not inherently neutral practices. We commit to making our practices open and accessible. We commit to welcoming feedback on our practices and to striving to practice a sustainable and equitable stewardship.
2. **We recognize the right of equitable access as well as the right to personal privacy.** We collect materials for the primary purpose of making them available for use; however, we understand that representation and visibility can be at once life-affirming and life-threatening for individuals and communities that have been the target of historic violence. We commit to a collecting practice that strives to provide broad and equitable access in a way that respects personal and collective rights to privacy.
3. **We value collective and collaborative forms of engagement.** We acknowledge that there is no single, authoritative form of history but rather as many histoires as individuals that seek to engage them. We welcome collaborative and collective work that strives to provide historical narrative and counter-narrative from many perspectives. Additionally, we prioritize forms of collecting and engagement that respect the historic calls of marginalized communities to create ‘nothing about us, without us.’

**Collection History**

The Institute for Advanced Study Board of Trustees and then Director J. Robert Oppenheimer commissioned the first history of the Institute for Advanced Study. At the time, the Institute found itself in the midst of foundational changes. In 1939, the Institute’s Founding Director, Abraham Flexner, stepped down from his role at the center of the Institute life. Only five years later in 1944, the Institute Founders Louis Bamberger and Caroline Bamberger Fuld passed away. A generational shift took place again in 1947 as a relatively young physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer replaced Institute Director Frank Aydelotte, originally one of the first Trustees for the Institute. In the midst of this change, the Institute hired Beatrice Stern, a noted corporate historian, to begin to assemble an official history beginning with the Institute’s foundation in 1930.

Stern spent several years interviewing key figures in Institute history and uncovering a significant body of research that would become the basis of her 700-page manuscript *The Institute for Advanced Study, 1930-1950.* Over the course of Stern’s work, she captured the lives of a generation as it passed. Her research materials included the administrative records and correspondence of administrators and Faculty alike. The timeliness of Stern’s work could not be understated. She remained on campus to witness the death of one of the most beloved members of the Founding Faculty, Albert Einstein, in 1955. Stern remained working as Einstein’s material belongings and home transferred into Institute custody, unaware that eventually her own work would feature along Einstein’s as the two gifts which comprise the basis of special collecting at the Institute. Throughout the next thirty years, Institute Librarians stewarded and safeguarded Stern’s collection of Institute records alongside individual Faculty collections providing access to researchers on a case-by-case basis.

In the late 1970s, Institute librarians began to grow concerned about the Library’s ability to steward the collections to the best standard of care as the Historical Science-Social Studies Library faced increasing pressures around collection space. Under the guidance of Librarian Elliot Shore, the Institute commissioned the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) to survey the holdings and make recommendations on the best way to care for the collection. The NHPRC affirmed the historic significance of the Institute’s holdings and that year the Institute began work on a formal Archival Policy.

In October 1986, the Institute Board of Trustees approved the “Archival Policy” which established the Institute’s archives. In the years that followed, the Institute continued to collect its official records and sought to help place the papers of Faculty at outside Institutions. During Peter Goddard’s tenure as Director, Institute Trustee Shelby White helped to transform this policy in 2007 with the generous support of the Leon Levy Foundation. With White’s support, the Institute began a major effort to create the space and environmental conditions needed to commit for the first time to retaining not only the Institute’s records but, in a much broader sense, to collecting the history of Institute Faculty.

The Shelby White and Leon Levy Archives Center opened in 2009 and the Institute hired its first professional archivist. Shortly thereafter, the Executive Officers of all four Schools approved the first Collection Development Policy to include a mandate to collect Institute records as well as Faculty papers in order to make them publicly accessible in the Institute’s new Archives Center.

Today, the Shelby White and Leon Levy Archives Center continues in this central work to cultivate an increasingly expansive sense of the Institute’s history. In this Collection Development Policy, the Archives Center outlines steps for the continued growth of both our collections and our connections to the community that sustains them.

**Collaborations and Partnerships**

The Shelby White and Leon Levy Archives Center prioritizes building and sustaining reciprocal relationships as an integral facet of collection development. In the words of Stephen Lubar, we recognize that *good curation “*lay[s] a foundation on which others could build,” one that is “[able] to change with the times,” and communicate to its audiences “the value of the collection.” Put simply we strive to build connections within our community as the basis of our collections.

The following list represents communities which we see ourselves in partnership and outlines communities that we would like to continue to engage:

* **Institute for Advanced Study Community of Scholars**
* **Institute for Advanced Study Administration and Workers**
* **Association of Members of the Institute for Advanced Study (AMIAS)**
* **Princeton University Libraries and Greater Community**
* **Princeton Regional Community**

We additionally support collaborative coalitions of collecting building through the following professional partnerships:

* **Delaware Valley Archivists Group**
* **Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collection Libraries**
* **Archives for Black Lives in Philadelphia**
* **Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Center**
* **Society of American Archivists**

**Collection Strengths and Areas of Specialization**

The Shelby White and Leon Levy Archives Center collections demonstrate significant strengths in the following areas:

* **Institute for Advanced Study Administration and Community History**The Shelby White and Leon Levy Archives Center strives to document the enduring impact of the Institute as an intellectual home and refuge for scholars across the globe. The Archives Center collects both a robust body of institutional records and a growing body of documentation that reflects the unique and diverse communities at the center of campus life.

Touchstone collections in this area include the Board of Trustees records, the Director’s Office records, and Faculty minutes. Together these records provide a unique perspective on the administrative histories of the Institute’s Trustees, Faculty, Members, Visitors, workers, and supporters. These anchor collections offer particularly keen insight into the Institute’s history, including significantly the Institute’s role in supporting scholars during global conflict.

The Archives Center additionally provides an intimate portrait of the academic and scholarly advancement made possible by bringing a diverse body of scholars into community. The Oral History Project records and the Louise Morse scrapbooks represent touchstone collections for the area of campus life. These two collections depict the key role that friendship, collegiality, and intimacy play in the development of advanced research.

* **Mathematics and Computing**

Since its foundation in 1930, the Institute has served as an Institutional home for 35 Nobel Prize laureates and 42 Fields Medalists. Among our many distinguished Faculty, the Institute community is extremely proud to have included some of the greatest mathematicians and mathematical discoveries of the past century. The Archives Center’s collections provide a significant record of these achievements from the mid-twentieth century onwards.

Among the touchstones included in our collections are the records of the Electronic Computer Project, which document Institute Faculty John von Neumann’s groundbreaking development of the “IAS Machine,” the first computer to leverage high-speed random-access storage matrix technologies and the template for nearly all modern computing. The records include meteorological and arithmetic logs that reveal the role of advanced computing in the development of a host of academic disciplines as far reaching as mathematics. engineering, and climatology. Simultaneously, ECP contracts with the Atomic Energy Commission and Ballistics Laboratories provide generous support for researchers seeking to understand the material effects of advanced computing as an integral part of the cultural, political, and social landscape of the modern and post-modern eras.

Other anchor collections in this area include the Institute’s collection of Albert Einstein ephemera as well as the Kurt Gödel papers. The Einstein ephemera is an important celebration of one of the Institute’s most beloved and celebrated Faculty. Our holdings include art and artifacts from Einstein’s Princeton home as well as several records detailing the Institute’s role in helping to shield the Jewish scientist from the Nazi Party in World War II. The Kurt Gödel papers, on the other hand, include the unpublished writings of one of Einstein’s closest acquaintances within the Institute community and one of the greatest mathematical logicians of the twentieth century.

* **Historical Studies**

The Archives Center collections demonstrate additional strength in their representation of the significant areas of research in the historical studies. Our holdings reflect the strides made by key Faculty at the Institute for Advanced Study in fields as far ranging as: Islamic studies, Medieval and Modern European studies, Near and East Asian studies, and Classical studies as well as philosophy and international relations more broadly.

Touchstone collections in this area demonstrate a particular strength in Islamic studies, Near Eastern studies, and ancient history as demonstrated in the Patricia Crone papers, Oleg Grabar papers, and Otto Neugebauer papers. Patricia Crone and Oleg Grabar’s papers in particular reveal the evolving history of scholarly approaches to Islamic studies over the course of the twentieth century from both archeological and historical perspectives. The Otto Neugebauer papers additionally offer a unique glimpse into the scholarly interchange at the heart of the Institute for Advanced Study where Neugebauer studied across different disciplines. His papers provide a particular emphasis on his work on astronomical cuneiform texts.

The collections in this area depict the evolution of historical studies across a variety of disciplinary approaches, from theoretical work to archeological and material-based historiography.

* **Natural Sciences**In a little over 50 years since its establishment in 1965, the Institute’s School of Natural Sciences has become a significant center for research in far ranging areas of the life and physical sciences. Our faculty have made key developments in: astrophysics, biology, mathematical physics, quantum field theory, particle phenomenology, string theory, quantum gravity, and, most recently, systems biology. The Institute records reflect a history of fostering scholarship at the frontier of these disciplines, including records related to key Faculty who preceded the School itself such as Niels Bohr, Paul Dirac, and Isidore I. Rabi, among others.

In addition to the Institute’s own records, the Archives Center’s special collections provide a particular strength in the growth and development of astrophysics in the 20th century. The John N. Bahcall papers provide insight into the development of the field of astrophysics with an emphasis on Bahcall’s work on the solar neutrino problem and the development of the Hubble Telescope in collaboration with Lyman Spitzer from the 1970s through to the 1990s. The Bahcall papers are complemented by the Scott Tremaine papers and the Stephen L. Adler papers which demonstrate the reach of the Institute’s scholars from astrophysics to elementary particles and quantum field theory.

* **Social Sciences**

Founded in 1973, the Institute’s School of Social Science approaches a critical examination of societies and social change from a diverse array of academic disciplines, including economics, law, psychology, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, and literature. While the youngest historically of the Institute’s four Schools, the School of Social Sciences includes such distinguished Faculty as Didier Fassin, Clifford Geertz, Alondra Nelson, Michael Walzer, and Joan Wallach Scott, among others. The School of Social Science’s programming reveals the School’s commitment to critical approaches to: anthropology, global economies and economics in times of social crisis, ethnographies of policing and public ethnography, law and legal theory, political theory and public policy, and, more broadly, philosophies and literatures engaged in interpretive social sciences. The Archives Center strives to mirror and represent the significant impact of the School of Social Sciences dedication to promoting social change through scholarship and research.

Our touchstone collection in this area is the Clifford Geertz papers. The Clifford Geertz papers reveal the long history of Geertz as the first and founding faculty member for the School of Social Sciences. The papers document Geertz’s effort to realize the School of Social Sciences as an interdisciplinary home for interpretive social sciences between 1970 through 2006. This collection provides an important foundation for understanding the historic work and legacy of social sciences at the Institute for Advanced Study.

**Areas for Strategic Growth and Development**The Shelby White and Leon Levy Archives Center is invested in fostering strategies for collection development that align with our existing strengths and expand to represent the growth of our community. In the essay “Mutualizing Knowledge, Bridging Differences, Sharing Resources on Collaborative Production” curatorial scholar Lotte Arndt asks “whether it is possible to transform... institutional situations into locations of exchange, productive conflict, and reciprocity” by turning away from traditional principles of collection development and curation to embrace collaborative models. Following this model, the Archives Center has highlighted the following areas in which we are actively seeking partnerships to develop:

* **Institute Community and Collaboration**

In the Founding mission of the Institute, Founding Director Abraham Flexner writes that the mission of the Institute is to call scholars “to assembly.” The idea of the importance of assembly, or community, is deeply embedded in the history of the Institute for Advanced Study. However, the Archives Center has identified a critical gap around documentation that allows researchers to understand the critical importance of the Institute community as the basis for visionary ideas.

The Archives Center actively seeks partnerships with individuals and/or groups whose work demonstrates the key role of collaboration and community in advanced scholarship. We welcome materials that document both individual and institutional partnership and we privilege materials that provide unique insight into the lived experiences of creating community both inside and outside of Institute walls.

* **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity**

The face of advanced research is increasingly changing to challenge deeply embedded prejudices that have historically enforced hegemonic claims about who is capable of conducting research. As advanced research changes to accept more voices from historically marginalized groups, we are faced with a unique opportunity to tell the stories of both institutional and individual efforts to co-construct a new face of scholarship.   
  
The Archives Center recognizes that this exclusion has resulted in the erasure of significant bodies of knowledge within the historic record and we are particularly interested in working with individuals seeking to engage the history of diversity and inclusivity in the past, present, and future of the Institute in the broadest sense. In the particular context of the Institute, diverse history includes the history of individuals within our community who identify as: African, African-American, Black, East Asian, Hispanic, Indigenous, Latin American, Middle Eastern, and/or South Asian. This also includes the history of individuals within our community who identify as: disabled, gender-diverse, neurodiverse and/or sexually-diverse.

* **Activism and Advanced Research**

The Institute’s Community of Scholars have demonstrated a continual commitment to leveraging their role as public academics and advanced researchers to advocate for the better of society as a whole. From Founding Faculty members like Albert Einstein and Oswald Veblen to contemporary Faculty like Suzanne Akbari and Alondra Nelson, Institute scholars have attempted to integrate scholarship into national and international debates on the public interest.

The Archives Center is interested in partnerships that support and further these efforts by promoting access to history scholarly activism as well as providing opportunities for new generations of researchers to participate in coalition building around new causes. We welcome materials and collaborations that document the Institute community’s efforts to create better and more sustainable futures.

* **Global Impacts**

Institute Faculty, Members, Visitors, and affiliated scholars have historically produced scholarship that fundamentally challenges universally accepted narratives. Our scholars have demonstrated the groundbreaking global impacts of work in a variety of fields.

The Archives Center seeks to document those projects and efforts which have made fundamental changes to scholarship in the diverse fields represented by the Institute’s distinguished Faculty.

**Collecting Methods**

The Shelby White and Leon Levy Archives Center currently accepts and acquires collections through the following methods:

* **Transfer**

The Archives Center’s primary mandate is to preserve the history of the Institute for Advanced Study. We welcome and assist in the effort to preserve and provide access to Institutional records. In line with the Institute’s Intellectual Property Policy, we provide consultation and appraisal of Institutional records created and accumulated by Institute administration and individual employees over the course of their employment with the Institute. Inactive records of historic value are transferred to the archives with approval from the Institute’s Archivist.

* **Donation**The Archives Center accepts donations of collections related to the Institute’s Community of Scholars which align with our goals for collection development. The Institute’s Archivist consults with individual donors to ensure that the collection will be stewarded and maintained in a way that is respectful and sustainable.
* **Purchase**

The Archives Center very rarely acquires collection materials from private individuals and/or organizations with the support of the Institute Historical Studies-Social Sciences Library. In these cases, the Archivist is responsible for ensuring that materials align with stated goals and values for collection development.

* **Post-Custodial Collecting and Web Archiving**

The Archives Center acknowledges that at times it is undesirable for the archives to remove collections from their original context and communities of creation. In these instances, the Archives Center remains committed to making use of post-custodial collecting strategies that leverage digitization and web-archiving technologies to assist in preservation and stewardship while leaving a collection within its community. The Archivist provides consultation and assistance on post-custodial collecting projects on a case-by-case basis.

**Accepted Formats**

The Shelby White and Leon Levy Archives Center accepts collection materials in the following formats:

* Audio-visual recordings,
* Books and printed ephemera,
* Born-digital records,
* Manuscripts,
* Microfilm and microfiche,
* Optical media (CDs, DVDs, etc.),
* Oral history,
* Paper-based documents and ephemera, and
* Prints and photographs, among others.

We additionally accept artwork and three-dimensional objects on a case-by-case basis where the Archives Center can responsibly ensure our ability to provide unique storage and preservation requirements necessary to sustain and provide access to that material.

**Related Collections**

The Archives Center works in collaboration with the many institutions and archives that hold similar collection development goals for the best interest of our scholars. These institutions include:

* Princeton University,
* Swarthmore College,
* American Philosophical Institute,
* Harvard University, and
* The Library of Congress, among others.

**Reappraisal, Transfer, and Deaccessioning**

The Shelby White and Leon Levy Archives Center recognizes the critical role that reappraisal, transfer, and deaccessioning have in ensuring the growth and sustainability of archival collections. The Archives Center follows professional standards and best practices to routinely reappraise our holdings and we work with partner institutions to ensure that wherever possible materials are transferred and/or returned to their creators if deemed out of scope.

**Policies and Procedures Related to Collection Care**

The Shelby White and Leon Levy Archives Center strives to make the work of collection maintenance open and accessible to the individuals invested in our collections.

**Policy Revision**

The Shelby White and Leon Levy Archives Center routinely revisits and reviews the policies that govern collection development and maintenance on a five-year basis. This policy will be reviewed in 2026.