

COLLECTION POLICIES

MENNONITE LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES 2018 update

The Mennonite Library and Archives collects documentation in all formats related to Anabaptist/Mennonite studies. The MLA Director will make collection decisions based on the general policies outlined in this document.

Published Materials (books, periodicals, audio-visual materials)

Because of limited staff time for cataloging, we have drastically reduced our purchases of books and audio-visual items from past practice. We now purchase books and audio-visual items from Mennonite Church USA-affiliated publishers, and from North American academic publishers of titles in Mennonite studies.

We accept donations of books and audio-visual items (and make occasional purchases) in several subject areas:

- Mennonite history
- Mennonite theology
- family histories of Mennonite families
- Mennonite hymnals
- Mennonite cookbooks
- Mennonite congregational histories
- theological topics of particular Mennonite interest: peace and pacifism, baptism, Sermon on the Mount
- 16th century Reformation
- Kansas and Great Plains history
- Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Hopi studies (because of Mennonite missions and the Voth and Petter papers)
- Russian history (including works on Germans from Russia)
- Vistula Delta (Polish/Prussian) history

Bibles: We accept donations only of Bibles that include family history information, or Bibles published by Mennonite-affiliated publishers. We will also consider on a case-by-case basis Bibles published before 1850 and Bibles in languages or translations that are not already represented in our collection.

Periodicals: We subscribe to

- MCUSA-related periodicals (including area conference newsletters west of the Mississippi)
- the main official periodical of other Mennonite denominations in North America
- *Mennonite World Review*
- a few international Mennonite periodicals
- some academic periodicals that publish Mennonite and Anabaptist articles
- a few periodicals related to archival work, public history, and historic preservation
- a few periodicals related to additional subjects listed above under books and audio-visual

Other periodicals that we continue to receive (such as periodicals from other historic peace churches, and a few local newspapers) are remnants of our older, more comprehensive collection policy which tried to encompass the entire Mennonite publishing world and a little beyond.

Archival records and personal/family collections

We are the official repository for long-term records of Bethel College, the former General Conference Mennonite Church, and Western District Conference. We are informally the repository for Mountain States Conference and Pacific Southwest Conference of MCUSA.

We are *not* an official repository for MCUSA national-level records. The Elkhart archives is the repository for the denominational offices.

We accept papers of individuals, families, and small Mennonite-related organizations (such as individual congregations) in order to help people answer questions about the Mennonite past, focusing on the past of the former General Conference Mennonite Church, Bethel College, and Mennonites in the Great Plains and western United States. We are using the term “papers” as a shorthand to mean documents in all formats, including electronic documents.

We are interested in collecting papers of persons who have been leaders in Mennonite organizations, such as pastors, educators, and missionaries. We are also interested in papers that contribute to understanding everyday life in Mennonite communities; these are more likely to come from persons who were not in church-related leadership.

For records of individual Mennonite congregations, we are most interested in membership records and congregational meeting minutes for the time period more than 50 years ago. A few congregations (mostly Western District and South Central) regularly send us church bulletins, newsletters, yearbooks, and directories. We are willing to accept such materials from MC USA congregations west of the Mississippi, but we have not actively encouraged this because of space and staff time considerations. For congregations that close down, we will accept all of the surviving records of the congregations.

We are interested in collecting records from other Mennonite-related organizations, similar to the following examples which we already have: Bethel Deaconess Hospital, MCC Central States, Kansas MDS, Wadsworth Institute, Halstead Seminary. Some organizational collections are from organizations that were not definitively Mennonite-related but had dominant Mennonite participation or strongly affected Mennonites in our geographic area: Kansans Concerned about Vietnam and other central Kansas peace groups, one room schools in central Kansas. We also have a few collections of Mennonite-owned businesses, such as Buhler Mill.

Up to about 1990, we accepted some papers relating to Newton and Harvey County history but not specifically connected to Mennonites. Now such collections are referred to the Harvey County Historical Society and most or all such existing collections have been transferred there.

Our usual practice is to transfer any non-documentary artifacts that are donated with papers to the Kauffman Museum. Small artifacts (e.g., medallions, plaques) may be kept with the papers if they seem to contribute significantly to understanding the person or organization. We will generally keep art works with the papers of the creating artists, unless the art items are of a size that we cannot safely store (e.g., larger sculptures), in which case we would transfer them to the Kauffman Museum.

The normal practice for accepting collections into the archives is that ownership of the collection is transferred to the archives, including any ownership of copyright that the owner of the records holds. In rare cases, we will consider loans of collections on a case by case basis. Records of organizations may often remain under the ownership of the organization, if it still exists. We will not consider loans of artifacts.

Note on book donations: When books are donated with personal papers, we generally follow these rules of thumb:

- if the person was already an adult around 1915, we keep all of the books with the papers (on the theory that such older books will be harder to find elsewhere if a researcher wants one of them)
- we will also keep pamphlets or “grey literature” or items published by obscure publishers, especially on religious topics, such as evangelical or fundamentalist publications of the 1920s-40s, also on the theory that they might be hard to find elsewhere
- we keep books that have underlining and marginal notes by the person
- we keep any books that are needed for the MLA library collection, and remove those from the papers for eventual cataloging
- all other books are usually disposed of to Book ReViews used book store

We always make a bibliography of the books (including noting any inscriptions of ownership or gifting) and keep it with the papers. Many of these bibliographies are also filed under “Mennonite Personal Libraries Project,” which provides an interesting source on what books Mennonites actually owned in the time period ca. 1875-1940.