

The University of Texas at San Antonio Libraries Special Collections Department (hereafter Special Collections) serves as the university's repository for primary source materials, including manuscripts, photographs, rare books, and university archives. Special Collections acquires specific materials relating to its core collecting areas: Mexican Americans and African Americans in south Texas; the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, and Transgendered community in south Texas; the Food and Beverage Industry in south Texas; Women's history in south Texas; Activism and Politics in south Texas; Tejano/Conjunto Music; Immigration along the U.S.-Mexico border; Business in south Texas; Photography in Texas with special emphasis on San Antonio and south Texas; and San Antonio history. In addition, Special Collections maintains a rare book collection and is the archives for UTSA. Special Collections accepts donations of collections with the primary purpose of making those collections available to students, scholars, and the general public.

The following document provides guidelines regarding the responsibilities of Special Collections to its donors, the conditions under which a donation may be accepted, and the types of material collected by Special Collections for the use of its patrons. When appropriate, referrals will be made to the Special Collections university archives or rare books unit, or the University Art Curator.

When accepting material, Special Collections is responsible for:

1. Maintaining the materials, ensuring accepted practice for preservation and security, preparing the materials for research use through professional arrangement and description and making them available in our research area to interested researchers on an equal basis during regular business hours.
2. Ensuring that the use of any material identified as sensitive by the donor is restricted from use in accordance with an agreement in writing accepted by both the donor and Special Collections. Special Collections cannot accept collections that are restricted indefinitely or for which the restriction cannot be enforced or applied equally to all researchers.
3. Returning to the donor, offering to another institution, or discarding materials that Special Collections wishes to remove from the collection, in accordance with the donor's instructions in a written agreement accepted by both the donor and Special Collections.
4. Securing legal documentation for every gift that makes clear the terms of the transfer and any instructions of the donor. Special Collections only accepts collections for which legal title to the physical items is transferred to the University of Texas at San Antonio by deed of gift.
5. Asking donors to donate not only the physical papers but also any copyright in them that the donor might own. (Ownership of copyright is separable from ownership of the physical item—such as a letter or photograph). However, Special Collections will consider donation of the physical material without donation of copyright.

When accepting material Special Collections cannot:

1. Accept donations without transfer of ownership.
2. Accept material for which the donor does not have clear ownership.
3. Provide appraisals of the monetary value of gifts. This is forbidden by IRS regulations.
4. Accept liability for loss or damage of materials due to deterioration, fire, or other disasters which befall the material or are inherent within it.
5. Act as a vendor for artists or other donors.

Types of Photographs Collected

While it is important that Special Collections staff be permitted to survey photographs and related records in order to determine which materials have enduring historical value, the lists below are an illustrative guide to the types of photographs which are likely to be useful for historical research. If you have any questions about this list, please contact Special Collections.

Special Collections generally acquires all formats of photographs which document Texas history, with special emphasis on San Antonio and south Texas, including those which depict:

- Underrepresented or marginalized communities
- Events or persons of significant political, historical, or cultural interest
- Historically significant natural events (major floods, droughts, etc.)
- Cityscapes or settings that show change or growth in the region over time (such as before-and-after photographs of the HemisFair area or other Urban Renewal areas)
- Subjects, persons, time periods, etc. which fill gaps in existing collections
- Select examples of changing styles in architecture, costume/dress, etc.
- Select examples of work from historical photographers of note in the region

Additionally, Special Collections strongly prefers photographs that exhibit the following qualities:

- In good condition (minimal wear, damage, fading)
- Of good technical and expressive quality (good composition, in-focus; free of distortions, aberrations, lens flare, etc.)
- High resolution (for digital photography)
- Original photographs made by the photographer named on the image or in accompanying documentation
- Authentic, verifiable, and free from manipulation or tampering
- Rare or highly unique in content, form, or production process

Special Collections generally does not acquire:

- Photographs lacking significant context, identification, or provenance
- Photographs with onerous or permanent restrictions on access or use
- Artistic photographs (still life, landscapes, animals, etc.)
- Bodies of work of photographers or family collections if portraiture constitutes most of that work
- Photographs for which we cannot provide adequate storage, such as extremely large photographs, or nitrate negatives if freezer space is not available
- Photographs in extremely poor condition, particularly those requiring significant conservation work in order to survive
- Extremely voluminous or highly disorderly collections; these generally require significant research and arrangement before they can be made useful
- Photographs depicting subjects which are already well-documented
- Copies of original items available through other repositories, museums, etc.
- Photographs that strongly compete with other area repositories' collecting focus (when Special Collections does not already have an established focus in such an area)