

Australian Churches of Christ Historical Society

Australian Archives and Victorian and Tasmanian Archives

Collection Policy

Adopted August 2010

The Australian Churches of Christ Historical Society (ACCHS) exists to collect, preserve, make available and educate others about the history and heritage of Australian Churches of Christ. As the ACCHS is situated in the state of Victoria, it also performs the above duties for Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania, managing the two Archives as a single entity. This document outlines policies regarding the acquisition, care and deaccession of historical documents, artefacts and oral history in the Collection maintained by the ACCHS.

1. The Collection

Objects in the ACCHS Collection must fall into one of six categories:

- 1.1. agencies and other organisational bodies belonging to Churches of Christ in Australia;
- 1.2. agencies and other organisational bodies belonging to Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania;
- 1.3. Churches of Christ congregations, their auxiliaries and associations, in Victoria and Tasmania;
- 1.4. individuals within the Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania or who undertook ministry or theological training in Victoria;
- 1.5. Austral Printing and Publishing Company, Vital Publications and their predecessors in Australia.
- 1.6. publications from other sources which mention in a significant way Churches of Christ in Victoria and/or Tasmania or Churches of Christ in Australia.

2. Method of acquisition

The ACCHS acquires objects for its Collection via the following methods and with the following provisos (also including those outlined in sections 3, 4 and 5).

- 2.1. The ACCHS collects items principally by donation (see section 4). Items potentially accepted into the Collection are listed on a Collection Schedule in the document addressed to the churches and public, 'Donating Historical Items'.
- 2.2. The ACCHS may in some cases purchase items where finances are available for the purpose as deemed appropriate by the ACCHS Committee (see section 3).
- 2.3. The ACCHS collects oral history following the ethical procedures outlined in this policy document (see section 5).

2.4. Acquisition must always be approached transparently, through donation or purchase, with the understanding that the object will be in the permanent possession of the ACCHS on behalf of the membership of Churches of Christ in Australia.

2.5. Members of the Committee of ACCHS may not offer to purchase or personally accept donations of objects for their private collections where those objects may also be offered to the ACCHS. If a conflict of interest develops between an individual member of the ACCHS and the ACCHS Archive, those of the ACCHS Archive should prevail.

3. Acquisition via purchase for the Collection

3.1. Items which the ACCHS could not reasonably expect to be donated to the ACCHS Archive (such as recent publications by authors unconnected with the denomination in Australia), may be purchased.

3.2. No single person can decide to purchase items on behalf of the ACCHS.

3.3. Items to be purchased should be put to the ACCHS Committee which would then decide as to the appropriateness and financial viability of their purchase.

4. Acquisition via donation to the Collection

4.1. The 'Collection Schedule' attached lists donation items within the ACCHS collection policy and also time frames and special procedures for donation.

4.2. As collection via donation is the main method by which the ACCHS preserves the history and heritage of the denomination, this collection schedule should be made available to churches and agencies to aid in their awareness of the appropriate procedures regarding historical items.

4.3. Where donations are made, donors should be made aware of the permanence of donation. They should also be thanked in writing (which may include email or other means).

4.4. Record of donors (including name, address and date of acquisition) must be kept both with the object and in the catalogue.

4.5. Where donated items contain financially or personally sensitive information an 'embargo against all access' may be placed on the item for a period of time to be determined by the Archivist in consultation with the donor. Notice of embargo should be placed with the item and in the item's catalogue listing.

5. Acquisition of oral history via interview

Special considerations are needed when collecting people's personal memories of the history of Churches of Christ. The following procedures must be followed when collecting oral history in order to protect both the interviewee and the interviewer.

5.1. A potential interviewee may be approached by phone, writing or in person. They may be approached once only, though they may be approached with the proviso that they will be contacted again after a set period if they say that they need time to consider whether or not they are willing to participate.

5.2. When arranging a time for interview, interviewees should be encouraged to suggest the time and place and should be invited to bring a friend for support. If people are hesitant in committing to a time and place then they should be left to

contact the ACCHS at a later date. It is important that people are not pressured into doing something they are uncomfortable about.

5.3. Before the day of the interview the procedure should be explained to interviewees. It is important that interviewees know what they are agreeing to before the day of the interview so they can back out if they wish. The following procedures will be followed:

5.3.1. the conversation will be recorded.

5.3.2. the recording will be kept in the ACCHS Archives and will be accessible by researchers.

5.4. At the time of the interview the interviewee should be shown the recording device and given a copy of the legal release contained in the 'Oral History Interview Agreement'. Two identical copies of the 'Oral History Interview Agreement' will need to be signed so that one can be lodged along with the recording in the ACCHS Archives and the interviewee has one to keep.

5.5. The recording and the signed 'Oral History Interview Agreement' should be placed in an envelope labelled with the date and interviewee's name and lodged with the ACCHS Archives.

5.6. Where oral history interviews contain financially or personally sensitive information an 'embargo against all access' may be placed on the interview recording and any transcript created for a period of time to be determined by the Archivist in consultation with the interviewee. Notice of embargo should be placed with the recording and/or transcript and in the catalogue listing.

6. Limits to acquisition for the Collection

Items which fall outside the six categories for Collection identified in section 1 (above) may be accepted for inclusion in the Collection by a majority vote of the Committee. The ACCHS ordinarily will *not* accept items offered for donation to the collection where:

6.1. a copy of the same item is already in the ACCHS collection, excepting if the items are distinguished by significant provenance indicated in marginalia or other annotation;

6.2. items would better suit the collection policies of other denominational or organisational archives;

6.3. the ACCHS does not have the facilities and resources to catalogue and care for the object properly (see section 11);

6.4. items pertain to individuals or Churches of Christ congregations in WA, SA/NT, NSW or QLD. In such cases potential donors should be directed to consult with the State Archivist in the relevant State Conference. Where no Archivist is appointed, donors should consult the relevant State Conference for advice as to where that state's archives are maintained (e.g., State Library);

6.5. the offer to donate is made subject to special conditions which are judged by the ACCHS Committee to be contrary to the long-term interests of the ACCHS and/or the broad membership of Churches of Christ in Australia.

7. Loans to and from the Collection

7.1. The ACCHS will not accept historical items on so-called permanent or long-term loan arrangements (being more than three months duration) due to concerns around duty of care of other people's or organisation's property.

7.2. The ACCHS will not accept so-called permanent or long-term loans of objects as to do so may result in later disputes over title to the object and may also result in the ACCHS being accused of obtaining permanent acquisition under the guise of a loan.

7.3. The ACCHS will accept short-term loans of objects, up to a period of three months, for the purposes of exhibition or copying.

7.4. In the case of short-term loans (up to three months), two identical copies of a loan agreement must be signed by both the owner of the object and a member of the ACCHS Committee. One copy is to be retained by the owner of the object and one placed with the Secretary of the ACCHS. The loan agreement must detail the following:

7.4.1. the condition of the object at the commencement of the loan;

7.4.2. the time at which the object will be returned;

7.4.3. the means by which the object will be returned.

7.5. Loans from the Collection may only be made to Churches of Christ congregations and agencies and other historical museums or organisations for the purpose of exhibition. Loans will not be made to individuals. The ACCHS may loan objects within their collection for a period of up to three months under the terms of the loan agreement outlined in section 7.4., provided that the ACCHS Committee is satisfied that the object will not be damaged in any way through being loaned.

8. Deaccession of objects in the Collection

8.1. Acquisitions by the ACCHS are considered permanent. Only in exceptional circumstances can items be disposed of and no individual can make this decision.

8.2. The decision regarding disposal of any given item must be made by the ACCHS Committee's examination of the object in relation to both collection and disposal procedure as outlined in this policy document.

9. Disposal procedures

9.1. Any donor, or person who contributed to the purchase of the object, should be (if possible) consulted.

9.2. Items should first be offered by exchange or gift to other archives.

9.3. Where items are not able to be accepted by other archives, items should secondly be offered for return to the donor. However, items should not be offered for return to the descendants of deceased donors as dispute over lines of inheritance may ensue.

9.4. Where items are not accepted by other archives or returned to donors, they may be offered for sale by public auction.

9.5. Items too badly damaged or deteriorated to be restorable may be destroyed.

9.6. Full records should be kept of all deaccession decisions and the objects involved.

9.7. Where items are to be deaccessioned by gift or exchange to another archive, proper arrangements should be made for the transfer of objects and accompanying documentation.

9.8. No member of the ACCHS committee or member of their families or close associates should ever be permitted to purchase or otherwise acquire objects which have been deaccessioned from the collection.

10. Income from disposal of items within the Collection.

Any monies made from the sale of objects must be used solely for the purpose of buying new objects for the collection. They should not be used for offsetting operating or capital expenditure.

11. Storage and conservation

The following principles and procedures regarding storage and conservation of historical objects (including documents and recordings) will be applied to the Collection.

11.1. Objects should be catalogued on a central database for the purposes of their identification, storage and retrieval which is central to the function of archives.

11.1.1. The database will arrange items in Record Groups, listing items within each Record Group.

11.1.2. The database will catalogue items according to the following categories (and other categories to be determined at the time of cataloguing): church congregation, church department or agency, person, publisher, date, special interest key words (eg. Ministry, Indigenous, Women, Liturgy), donor contact details and date of acquisition.

11.2. The database or catalogue should be accessible by the members of the ACCHS Committee at any time, subject to the opening hours of the building in which it is housed.

11.3. Objects should be placed in archival quality storage materials only and stored in line with preventative conservation principles.

11.4. Preventative conservation should be undertaken always. Objects should be housed appropriately and treated to prevent damage by light, humidity, temperature, water, pests, inappropriate packing, permanent marking, over-handling or being stored on the floor.

11.5. Remedial conservation should be undertaken only when necessary and only by persons trained specifically in the practice of remedial conservation. Well intentioned repairs can lead to irreversible damage to historical objects and should not be undertaken by non-experts.

11.6. The Collection should be housed in a secure room or rooms and closed to the public except where special arrangements are made (see section 12.).

11.7. For further detail on storage and conservation, the standard text (at the time of this policy's adoption) should be consulted: Ambrose, T. and Paine, C., *Museum Basics*, International Council of Museums (in association with Routledge): London, 1993.

12. Access

The Archive maintains a closed door and is not 'open to the public'. However limited access to the Collection may be obtained according to the following principles and procedures:

12.1. A research service will be offered to the public and the churches on a user-pays basis. This research service will locate and supply copies of requested information.

12.2. Copies may be made of any documents or other items within the Collection except where copying breaches copyright legislation or privacy embargoes.

12.3. The ACCHS assumes copyright of all items in the Collection where copyright is not already held by another party, eg. publisher.

12.4. A catalogue of the Collection will be made available remotely (online) to the public to facilitate research service enquiries.

12.5. Individuals wishing to conduct their own research may request that the Archivist grant them supervised access by appointment and in the presence of a Committee member.

12.6. Post-graduate researchers, including CCTC graduate students and faculty, may be granted limited unsupervised access to the Collection by the Archivist only after an induction procedure involving the reading of this Collection Policy Document.

13. Implementation of policy

13.1. This policy document will be displayed in full with the Collection in the Archive room/s and kept on file by the ACCHS Secretary.

13.2. A separate document addressed to the public will outline the ACCHS Collection Policy to the churches and public, but this document may also be supplied upon request.

13.3. A majority vote of the ACCHS Committee is required to make alteration to the document.

13.4. This document is due for review in 2020.

Author: KJ Handasyde, August 2010.