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## **The Mission Statement**

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The mission statement supports the collection development policy by providing a guide of what is important to the institution. It provides a general framework under which all collection development and appraisal policies and decisions should be made. A mission statement is a declaration of purpose that explains the role of an organization and who it serves. It is an important tool that formalizes and establishes a tone for the functioning of an Archives.

The mission statement for an Archives should reflect the institution's reasons for acquiring and providing access to materials. It should include a summary description of what the Archives collects. A mission statement should be short and succinct -- no more than a paragraph long. It is a general statement from which all the administrative documents created by an institution must grow. As in museums, the mission of the archives is the foundation upon which its collections are based. A well-articulated mission must therefore precede the writing of the collection development policy.

If an organization does not solely function as an archival repository, it should create a mission statement specifically for its Archives. During the writing or rewriting of the collection development policy, the writers should also ensure that the elements of the policy reflect the principles of the Archives' mission and that of the parent institution. This mission should clearly define the purpose of the collection and its relationship to the parent institution. The Archives' mission should grow from that of the parent institution and cement its significance to the institution's overall goals.

A clear statement will enable an institution to run more effectively by allowing it to communicate its purpose and will help it attract donors, researchers, and collaborators who support this purpose. An effective mission statement will allow outsiders to better understand your institution and to recognize the professionalism in how it is run, making them more willing to support you in all your activities.

A very general mission statement can easily accommodate any collecting parameters an institution desires. However, too general a statement does not help the collecting focus of the institution. A good mission statement will strike a balance between ambiguity and specificity, but it must provide strong guidelines for decision-making or the policies that grow from it will not have a solid foundation. The mission statement should precisely define the people, areas, and activities the repository documents.

An archive's mission statement should consist of core elements including:

- a description of the organization's purpose in terms of what it collects and what activities it conducts
- a discussion of the role the organization plays in the community and the archival world based on its defined purpose
- an explanation of the audience the institution serves defined by their professions, common interests, similar concerns, geographic locale, age, gender, ethnicity, or other shared traits

**“Call it a PR statement if you will, but have a simple, easy to remember and repeat statement that your board members, staff and volunteers can effectively use to lobby on behalf of your organization.”**

- The Evergreen State Society. “What Should Our Mission Statement Say?” Seattle, Washington: Internet Non-Profit Center, 2003. <http://www.nonprofits.org/npofaq/03/21.html>