

BOOTH FAMILY CENTER *for* SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Access Policy for Manuscripts Collections

The Georgetown University Library (“Library”) is committed to making the manuscripts collections held in the Booth Family Center for Special Collections (“Special Collections”) open and accessible to Georgetown University faculty, students, and visiting researchers, subject to the policy guidelines and restrictions noted below.¹ Special Collections facilitates access to collections by promoting their availability via online finding aids, subject guides, digital portals and other descriptive means; by fielding inquiries from and consulting with users; by making collections available for research use on campus in the Special Collections Reading Room and for educational use in the Special Collections classroom and exhibition galleries; and by participating in the Library’s digitization program through its repository, DigitalGeorgetown.

I. Intellectual Accessibility

In accordance with the ACRL/SAA Joint Statement on Access to Research Materials in Archives and Special Collections Libraries, the Library makes available original research materials in its possession on equal terms of access. The Library does not deny any researcher access to materials, grant privileged or exclusive use of materials to any researcher, or conceal the existence of any body of materials from any researcher unless required to do so by law, donor or purchase stipulation, or other considerations specified in this access policy.

II. Access Guidelines for Manuscripts Collections

The Library is committed to the long-term preservation of research materials and to making them available for research as quickly as practicable following their acquisition and processing. Access to these materials may be limited by several factors, including legal or institutional obligations, preservation requirements, or resources needed to arrange and describe the materials.

- A. **Preservation and Security.** The Library may limit the use of collections, or materials within certain collections, for preservation or security reasons. In these situations, and where unlimited by other policy or resources considerations, the Library may provide suitable reproductions to researchers in lieu of original documents.

¹ This policy governs access to material housed in the Georgetown University Manuscripts Collections. A separate policy governs access to the Maryland Province Archives, which is owned by the Maryland Province of the Society of Jesus and is on deposit at Georgetown University Library. Additionally, a separate policy governs access to material housed in the Georgetown University Archives.

- B. **Donor Restrictions.** In cases in which donors wish to impose restrictions upon their papers to protect privacy or confidentiality, the Library seeks to ensure that those restrictions are reasonable, that they are limited to a defined period of time, and that the period of time is as short as possible. The Library's policy is to inform researchers of restrictions that apply to collections, to inform researchers of the duration of the restrictions, and to make information about restrictions generally available.
- C. **Patron Responsibilities.** The Library requires all patrons to use all research materials in accordance with its published institutional use and access policies. The Library applies and enforces these policies equally. To protect its collections, the Library requires valid, government-issued identification or valid university identification from any individual using or wishing to use its materials, as well as a signature verifying the individual has agreed to abide by the Library's policies and regulations. The Library reserves the right to revoke the privilege of access from an individual researcher who has violated its published policies and regulations.
- D. **Restricted Materials.²** The Library's manuscripts collections may include material that is sensitive or confidential and which is protected under federal privacy statutes, including, but not limited to, personally identifiable information (such as Social Security numbers, University identification numbers, and addresses); privileged information (such as attorney-client communications or priest-parishioner communications); government classified information; and certain other educational, medical, financial, criminal, human resources, or personnel information or documentation. While Library staff make every effort to identify restricted material within a collection, researchers agree to alert staff if they encounter such material. Researchers also agree not to record, reproduce, or disclose restricted information that may be included in requested materials. Violation of this agreement may result in the loss of research or access privileges in the Georgetown University Library.
- E. **Unprocessed Materials.** Access to unprocessed manuscripts collections is restricted for potential security, preservation, and confidentiality and privacy reasons. In setting its processing priorities, the Library takes researcher interest into account and welcomes inquiries about unprocessed collections; expressions of interest should be addressed to the Head of Archival Processing by means of the [Special Collections Information Request form](#).
- F. **Equality of Access.** The Library applies and enforces consistently and equally to all users any limitations that it may impose on access to its holdings, including unprocessed materials, subject to the legal and institutional obligations as noted above.

² The Library complies with Georgetown University [Human Resources Policy 403, Confidential Information](#).



Definitions for the purposes of this policy:

Processed material is material that has been arranged, described, and housed for storage, long-term preservation, and use by patrons. Material shall be considered as described if a finding aid or other access tools have been created that allow individuals to browse a surrogate of the collection to facilitate access and that improve security by creating a record of the collection and by minimizing the amount of handling of the original materials. (See definitions of [processing](#) and [description](#) in the Society of American Archivists' Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology.)

Unprocessed material is material that has not been arranged, described, and housed for storage, long-term preservation, and use by patrons.

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