

ACRL-RBMS/SAA Guidelines on Access to Research Materials in Archives and Special Collections Libraries

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Introduction

Both the Society of American Archivists' Core Values (<https://www2.archivists.org/statements/saa-core-values-statement-and-code-of-ethics>) and Rare Books and Manuscripts Section's Statement on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (<https://rbms.info/about/#diversity>) emphasize the importance of providing access to materials. This document is intended to be applied in conjunction with the SAA Code of Ethics for Archivists (<https://www2.archivists.org/statements/saa-core-values-statement-and-code-of-ethics>), the RBMS Code of Ethics for Special Collections Librarians (http://rbms.info/standards/code_of_ethics/), and other related professional statements and standards. Within the context of repository types, audiences, collections, or other factors, these Guidelines can serve as an advocacy tool and foundation for policies and procedures to facilitate equitable access to resources and services.

Discoverability

- Establish a minimum baseline for intellectual access to holdings, even in the case of unprocessed and/or restricted materials.
- Enable the discoverability of collections with finding aids, catalog records, blogs, web pages, databases, and other means.
- Assess discovery tools regularly and update as needed.

Physical and Digital Materials

- Make available all materials intended for public access, regardless of format.
- Implement policies, procedures, and programs to ensure the authenticity, reliability, completeness, and preservation of materials from one user to the next.

Laws, Regulations, and Restrictions

- Restrictions on access may be imposed to protect national security, by law, by institutional mandate, tribal laws, cultural stewardship practices, by donor agreement, or to preserve materials. If restricted due to preservation concerns, provide materials in an alternative format.
- Fulfill legal and institutional obligations to protect privacy or confidentiality as outlined by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), the Privacy Act, and other applicable laws or regulations.
- Make information on restricted materials accessible.
- Advocate for limited or no restrictions when negotiating with donors of materials.

- Periodically review and reevaluate restricted material. Remove restrictions when they are no longer required.
- Implement security measures to safeguard staff and collections.

Copyright

- Communicate the copyright status of materials.
- Ensure researchers understand that they are responsible for adhering to copyright law¹ when copying, using, or publishing from materials.

Accessibility

- Factor accessibility into all areas of access including the reading room, collections, exhibits, services, and events.
- Address and advocate for policy and workflow changes to remove barriers.
- Comply with state and federal guidelines for accessibility of collections, venues, and services according to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)², Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), respective SAA and ALA accessibility guidelines, and other related parameters.³
- Provide alternative format options to accommodate users.

Reproductions and Use

- Provide access to collections at no direct cost to users.
- Make policies governing access and use available.
- Offer reproduction services administered in accordance with the copyright laws, institutional access policies, and repository regulations.⁴

Notes

[1] For more information on copyright and user rights please see the SAA pamphlet available here:

<https://www2.archivists.org/publications/brochures/copyright-and-unpublished-material>
(<https://www2.archivists.org/publications/brochures/copyright-and-unpublished-material>).

[2] The ADA guidelines relate to gaining physical access to the building, room, or space.

[3] American Library Association, Library Services for People with Disabilities Policy:

<http://www.ala.org/asgcla/resources/libraryservices> (<http://www.ala.org/asgcla/resources/libraryservices>).

Society of American Archivists, Guidelines for Accessible Archives for People with Disabilities

<https://www2.archivists.org/standards/guidelines-for-accessible-archives-for-people-with-disabilities>
(<https://www2.archivists.org/standards/guidelines-for-accessible-archives-for-people-with-disabilities>).

[4] ACRL/RBMS Guidelines Regarding Security and Theft in Special Collections:

http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/security_theft (http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/security_theft); ALA

Copyright information and resources: <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/copyright>

(<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/copyright>).