

# **AHS Historic Collections Collections Plan**

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- [Introduction](#)
- [Mission](#)
- [Scope & Mandate](#)
- [Limitation of Scope](#)
- [Collection Strengths](#)
- [Acquisition Policy](#)
- [A Critical Criteria Checklist for AHSHC's Collecting](#)

### Introduction:

Alberta Health Services Historic Collections (AHSHC) holdings contain over 3000 medical artefacts, more than 10,000 rare and historic photographs and hundreds of historic documents, plaques, ledgers, textbooks, notebooks and personal correspondence related to nursing and medical practice in Alberta.

The AHSHC is a not for profit institution whose collections are retained and preserved for a two-fold purpose: 1. to meet Alberta Health Services legal obligation to retain and preserve vital historic records and safeguard records of enduring value to Alberta Health Services. 2. To preserve and communicate the history of Alberta health care professionals and institutions through the care, storage, documentation, and exhibition of these records, photographs and artefacts.

AHSHC is a permanent facility located at 1117-55 Ave NE Calgary that is open to the public 9-noon on Mondays and Wednesdays, and open to researchers on a by appointment basis. The AHSHC's collections are made available for research and communication of healthcare history through regular publicly accessible exhibits, lectures to public and professional audiences, and hands-on presentations of the collection's educational materials.

### AHS Historic Collections Mission:

To preserve and convey the collective memory of Alberta healthcare, its past and its modern landmark moments and issues --- to inspire Albertans and healthcare professionals to explore and enhance our sense of Alberta's healthcare heritage, its institutions, nursing and medical staff. AHSHC acquires, preserves, and provides research access to artefacts and healthcare records of provincial significance, while ensuring that the unique content and confidential nature of these materials are monitored and safeguarded.

### Scope and Mandate:

The materials in the AHS Historic Collections are held in the public's interest and specific to healthcare's unique contribution to Alberta's history and society. These collections range from records, vital records and photographs, to artefacts and framed artworks. Records, as per the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act are defined as "a record of information in any form and includes books, documents, maps, drawings, photographs, letters, vouchers and papers, and other information that is written, photographed, recorded, or stored in any manner, but does not include software or any mechanism that produces records." All records in the AHS Historic Collections care are retained and made accessible according to FOIP and HIA policy and legislation.

Collections in AHSHC fall into two categories:

1. **Alberta Health Service Records and artefacts:** AHS Historic Collections houses and preserves records, vital records and artefacts of historical significance and enduring value to Alberta Health Services organizations, agencies, and boards.
2. **Private records and artefacts:** AHS Historic Collections may acquire by gift, bequest or loan, any record or artefact, regardless of physical form or characteristic, pertinent to the history of Alberta's healthcare through negotiation with the persons giving, bequeathing, or lending records. Acquisitions from these sources are approved by the AHS Archivist/Curator and the Coordinator, Records Management.

### **Limitation of Scope:**

A standard criterion for collecting artefacts and materials (outlined in the checklist of critical criteria section) notwithstanding, AHS Historic Collections acquires its collections according to the following value guidelines:

- respect authorized mandates of other heritage institutions
- Recognize that some artefacts and records may be significant to certain facilities, locales, or organizations. If AHS Historic Collections is approached to acquire artefacts or documents pertinent to these areas or organizations, it will first ensure that those facilities or organizations are not able to, or interested in, the retention of the artefacts or records, and not in a position to facilitate research or exhibit access to these materials. AHSHC staff will make themselves available to any local facility wishing to upgrade its storage and preservation conditions to facilitate retention of locally significant artefacts and records.
- AHSHC staff has the staff and resources to ensure that accepted artefacts and records can be processed and made accessible within a reasonable time frame.

### **Collection strengths:**

To date, most of the historic collections (artefacts, records, historic and contemporary photographs) originate from the Calgary Health Region's predecessor institutions, including individual hospitals (e.g. Calgary General Hospital), groups of hospitals (e.g. Calgary District Hospital Group) other health care providers (e.g. Calgary board of health) and individuals who have donated artefacts and records related to the history of healthcare in Calgary. With the formal creation of Alberta Health Services in April 2009, the geographic scope of this collection became province-wide.

The major strengths of the collection are the records, photographs, personal artefacts, institutional medical equipment, documents and graduation diplomas related to the Calgary General Hospital, and extensive photographic, artefact and document collections related to many of Calgary's major healthcare facilities (e.g. Salvation Army Grace Hospital, Alberta Children's hospital, Holy Cross Hospital). A number of Calgary's most important early nurses and physicians are represented in the artefact and photographic holdings.

## **Acquisition policy:**

There are four guiding principles for the collecting policy. In order of priority, these are:

1. The first priority is to preserve and retain Alberta Health Service records, vital records, images and artefacts of historic significance. These materials include those currently maintained in offsite storage in Calgary, and in other facilities throughout the province. AHSHC is committed to examining, assessing and either A) transferring these materials to the AHSHC's environmentally controlled facility or B) advising on the upgrade of storage and documentation of these in their onsite locations.
2. Collecting records, photographs, and objects from primary sources with opportunities to record first hand experiences. The reputation of any good collection is grounded in the information that supports it. Since many of our pioneer nurses and physicians are elderly and their passing is a daily occurrence, the opportunity to gather their memorabilia and recollections is rapidly diminishing. The AHSHC's collecting policy recognizes the urgency of these opportunities, so first priority is given to collecting direct from and interviewing these primary sources.
3. Collecting records, photographs, and objects that meet ongoing research, exhibition and educational programs of the AHS Historic Collections.
4. Collecting records, photographs and objects that fill gaps in the existing collection and improve the collection's documentation.

## **A Critical Criteria Checklist for AHSHC's collecting:**

- Are the materials donation, loan or internal AHS transfer?
- Will the materials complement (relevant) what already exists in AHS Historic Collections?
- Are the materials significant to Alberta's healthcare history?
- Are the materials well-documented? Of good quality?
- Does the potential donor actually own the item and have the legal right to dispose of it?
- How detailed is the provenance supplied with these materials? (e.g. Original owner's notes, details, correspondence, interview transcripts with a maker or source; Are the records linked to a particularly important time in that individuals, organizations, community's, or area's history?)
- Does AHSHC already have representative examples of this record? Is this particular record in better condition and better documented than any in the institution's collection?
- Do you have space/appropriate storage conditions for a new collection in AHS Historic Collections storage?
- Does this potential acquisition require special storage needs or conservation?
- Will this acquisition fit with the projected growth and direction of AHSHC's collections?
- Does this acquisition have potential for use in exhibits, lecture presentations, or significant research projects?