

MANAGING BRANCH ARCHIVES

Your AAUW records are valuable! They are your branch's institutional memory. They document specific achievements of your branch and branch members. Historians have long been aware of the importance of AAUW's contributions to women's history. The records we preserve link us to that history and to the future.

This article will focus on how to gather and how to prepare and organize branch archives. AAUW of Virginia is fortunate to have archives at the University of Virginia. Since all Virginia branches are invited to store their records there as well, a third section tells how to store your archives at UVA. Details I give here pertain to UVA's requirements. If your branch has already secured a repository, feel free to use it, but note any small differences in what is provided.

First, every branch should designate someone to be responsible for collecting items, usually the historian, but it could be anyone willing to do it. Ask all branch members to contribute items they have acquired (and probably want to get rid of) to the designee. The items should be stored in a cool, dry place, not a basement or attic until they are placed in a permanent location. It is helpful to historians and others using these items, if documents are signed and dated.

What to gather

- Articles of incorporation, for incorporated branches, and charters
- Bylaws, policies, and handbooks
- Correspondence of officers and others, if of historical value
- Descriptions, programs, photographs, and publicity for branch events and projects
- Directories of members and lists of officers
- Budgets and year-end financial reports
- Artifacts and memorabilia (such as pins, badges, gavels)
- Branch publications (histories, newsletters, and brochures)
- Minutes of branch and board meetings
- Press releases and newspaper articles about branch
- Important speeches to branch and state members
- Scrapbook contents, not the books
- State convention program books if they contain branch information

How to prepare your items for archives

- Remove materials that do not belong in the archives, such as duplicates (retain no more than three copies of an item), receipts, canceled checks, Post-its, AAUW national publications
- Remove metal paper clips and metal staples (plastic is okay)
- Copy or scan newspaper articles onto acid-free paper, then discard newsprint
- Insert fragile articles and photographs into Mylar sleeves
- Use pencil, not pen, to label archival papers, folders, and backs of photographs
- Carefully remove cardstock frames on photographs

There is no prescribed order for your materials, but the list above may provide you with some ideas. Since UVA provides its own archival materials, you may file your materials in previously used folders.

Cross out labels that don't apply and write specific names for the contents, maybe using a Sharpie. Avoid vague labels, like *Miscellaneous*. Arrange the folders in the order you want in any sturdy boxes. Don't crowd the material. When your collection is complete, inventory each box, keep one copy for your branch, and place one in the box. Label each box on the outside with *AAUW of Virginia, branch name, and the number (1 of 4, etc.)*. Be sure to include the name and contact information of a branch member so UVA can send its own inventory to you.

How to store your branch archives at UVA

AAUW of Virginia has archived its records, circa 1930-2010, in the Special Collections Library of University of Virginia's Alderman Library. Virginia branches are encouraged to donate their archives to this same collection. Librarians at the Special Collections Library will repack your items into archival folders and boxes. There is NO charge for the materials or storage. This is your tax dollars at work.

Call the UVA Special Collections Library (434-924-3082) to make arrangements to deliver your materials.

Contact me if you have questions, or if I may help you.

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