



The other point to consider before starting is the need to define exactly what you are keeping. It is very easy to start collecting and adding items of interest until you are collecting absolutely everything. Collecting and managing archives requires resources. It is time consuming to arrange and manage. It requires archival storage, ideally in acid-free folders and boxing. It requires storage space and someone to accept responsibility for ongoing archiving. So it is not surprising that the management of archives slips down the list of priorities. A collection policy will ensure that your archive is focused on your interest and that resources are not being put towards the preservation of unnecessary items.

Depending on the size and type of collection, the policy can be as short as a single statement that defines what you are keeping and why. If you are a dance supporter with a collection of memorabilia and ephemera such as programmes, clippings, reviews, etc, a statement such as *I will collect material of New Zealand dance companies and dancers, and international dancers and companies who visit New Zealand* will be adequate. This may sound pedantic but it is important to have a focus to your collecting.

A larger organisation such as a dance company requires a complex collection policy. The aim of the policy is to provide a guideline for all who are involved with archives – from creation to use. The policy would start with a description of the company and its reason for being. It would describe the sort of material to be included in the archive. For example does the archive include information on other dance companies and if so, which companies and why. Another consideration is that it is no longer feasible to think of archives as paper based when so many of our current records are digital. It may include preservation guidelines by describing how items will be stored. The policy may include a statement on copyright, privacy and any other legal issues. It may include the process of managing an external request for use of company photographs.

It can even include appendices such as a Retention and Disposal Schedule which clearly defines how the company's business records are managed, naming those records will be preserved, ultimately becoming archives, and those that can be discarded after a set period of time. For example a proportion of documentation required for taxation purposes needs to be retained only for seven years. Another possible appendix is a disaster plan providing guidelines on how to protect archives in case of a fire or flood – who to call and a list of people and companies (with contact details) that can help in an emergency.

In summary, sound policies provide a framework and context to your archive. The policy will define exactly what you are keeping and explain why. The type and size of the collection dictates the complexity of the policy; a private individual with an ephemera collection will require a simple policy while a dance company or owner of a larger collection will benefit from a more complex policy. It may be helpful to develop a Retention and Disposal Schedule because this will help you keep on top of your collection. Another helpful tool is a Disaster Plan that you will hopefully never have to activate. One of the advantages of sorting your papers is efficient use of space. Sorting and disposing of unwanted material, re-housing wanted material into standardised archival storage will reduce the storage space considerably. A basic inventory will improve access and allow you to use the collection to your advantage, making the archives work for you.

See DANZ website resources page for further professional development resources:  
[www.danz.org.nz/resources.php](http://www.danz.org.nz/resources.php)

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