

LIBR 289 e-Portfolio
Fall 2008

Evidence for Competency F

LIBR 256 – Archives and Manuscripts

Collection Processing Assignment

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Archives and Manuscripts 256

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This collection of the personal and professional papers of Edward F. Fisher was donated by General Motors Fisher Guide Division to the Detroit Public Library National Automobile Collection.

Processing a collection involves selecting, preserving, and making available materials of enduring research value for current and future use. It is an involved and conscientious effort on the part of the archivist to process material as thoroughly and effectively as possible so that the final product is of value to researchers. Processing involves three major steps: identifying the contents of the collection, organizing and arranging the materials, and creating finding aids to provide access to the materials.

The first step in processing this collection was to examine the contents of the donation to identify their provenance, structure, and content. The donor advised that the collection had no original order to it giving the archivist more leeway to organize it. The collection was collected over the life of Mr. Fisher, who was one of seven siblings who had a successful family business—The Fisher Body Corporation—that later merged with General Motors. As such the collection was gathered within the context of the Fisher family life and business endeavors. Throughout the internal and external research performed on this collection it was also learned that its contents have extensive points of reference or relationships to other collections and personalities.

After contents were identified, certain information was collected in order to provide accurate and useful descriptions for the material. The following information was gathered at this stage:

1. Provenance – The collection was donated by the General Motors Fisher Guide Division.
2. Creator – The person or body responsible for assembling all the material was the Records Department of General Motors, located at the company's headquarters in Detroit, Michigan. The department is in charge of collecting, preserving, and disseminating information on the company, its officers, and business practices. General Motors acquired the Fisher Body Corporation in 1932 and has since been collecting material on one of its most dedicated officers, Edward F. Fisher.
3. Sources – Some information gathered for the finding aid has been gathered from encyclopedias, business articles, and his family history.
4. Organization – There was no original order to this collection. Thus, processing involved looking for connections between the items in order to establish an organization by groupings. In this case, the collection has been organized by documents types arranged alphabetically, and chronologically thereafter.
5. Physical Condition – This collection is not in need of any conservation measures.
6. Extent of the Collection – Information useful to researchers such as linear feet the collection occupies on the shelf (attesting to amount of material available), the type of material (i.e. correspondence, meeting minutes, etc.), and usage restrictions have been noted accordingly.
7. Collection Summary – Information to develop a summary description was gathered from analyzing its contents and it is intended to provide a brief background to the researcher on the context of the collection. At this stage it was crucial to determine what information to include

or exclude. This was done taking into account the significance of certain materials in relationship to others in the collection.

Once the contents were duly identified, the next step was to organize and arrange all the materials. The organizational structure of the collection is divided into two major headings: Business and Personal. The business portion includes any materials that are related to the Fisher Body Corporation and General Motors such as correspondence, annual reports, meeting minutes, and marketing. The personal portion includes any materials of a personal nature such as letters and journals. Within the two main headings, items have been assigned categories. Some of those categories are further divided according to the nature of the material. For example:

Marketing; Charts

Marketing; Illustrations

Marketing; Signs

The last step in completing the processing of the collection was to assemble the finding aid in a way that it is easy to read and interpret by the researcher.