

Concordia Historical Institute

Collection Policies and Procedures

Guidelines for Actively Managing
the Documentary History
of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Daniel N. Harmelink

2025



CONCORDIA HISTORICAL INSTITUTE

TREASURING & TRUMPETING
LUTHERAN HISTORY

FOR ALL THE SAINTS

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**Concordia Historical Institute Collection Policies and
Procedures: Guidelines for Actively Managing the
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Synod. Revised. Edited by Daniel N. Harmelink.**

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**The active management of the CHI Collection
under clear and responsible policies and procedures
treasures and trumpets Christ's redeeming work
in the life of the Lutheran Church.**

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In accordance with its mission and vision, the Institute maintains and develops its Collection in accordance with the twin goals of preserving and proclaiming the history of the Missouri Synod as well as the theological, historical, and cultural context of the Missouri Synod.



Concordia Historical Institute Collection

Management Policy

1. Purpose

Concordia Historical institute holds its Collection as the Department of Archives and History of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and for the benefit of the Missouri Synod and its entities. The CHI Collection Management Policy establishes guidelines, procedures and legal responsibilities for the active management of the Institute’s Collection. In addition, the Collection Management Policy demonstrates the Institute’s commitment to maintaining high standards of professional and ethical excellence in the management of the materials entrusted to it.

2. Collection Goals

In accordance with its mission and vision, the Institute maintains and develops its Collection in accordance with the twin goals of preserving and proclaiming the history of the Missouri Synod as well as the theological, historical, and cultural context of the Missouri Synod.

3. Development and Implementation of the Collection Management Policy

Policy is developed by the Executive Director in consultation with the CHI staff and “blessed” by the CHI Board of Governors. The Executive Director is responsible for proper implementation of the Collection Management Policy. The ED exercises oversight while delegating day-to-day management of the Collection to the CHI Archivist. Collection Management Policy will be reviewed and re-evaluated by the ED and CHI staff at least every 3 years.

4. Sharpening the Definition of the Scope of the CHI Collection

The participants believe that the past guidelines concerning material that falls into the collection scope at CHI is too broad and currently unmanageable and unsustainable. See organizational chart “The Scope of the Collections at Concordia Historical Institute - November 1997.” The current CHI Board of Governors and the Executive Director are required to revise the desire of “founder” Suelflow for CHI to continue to develop into three branches:

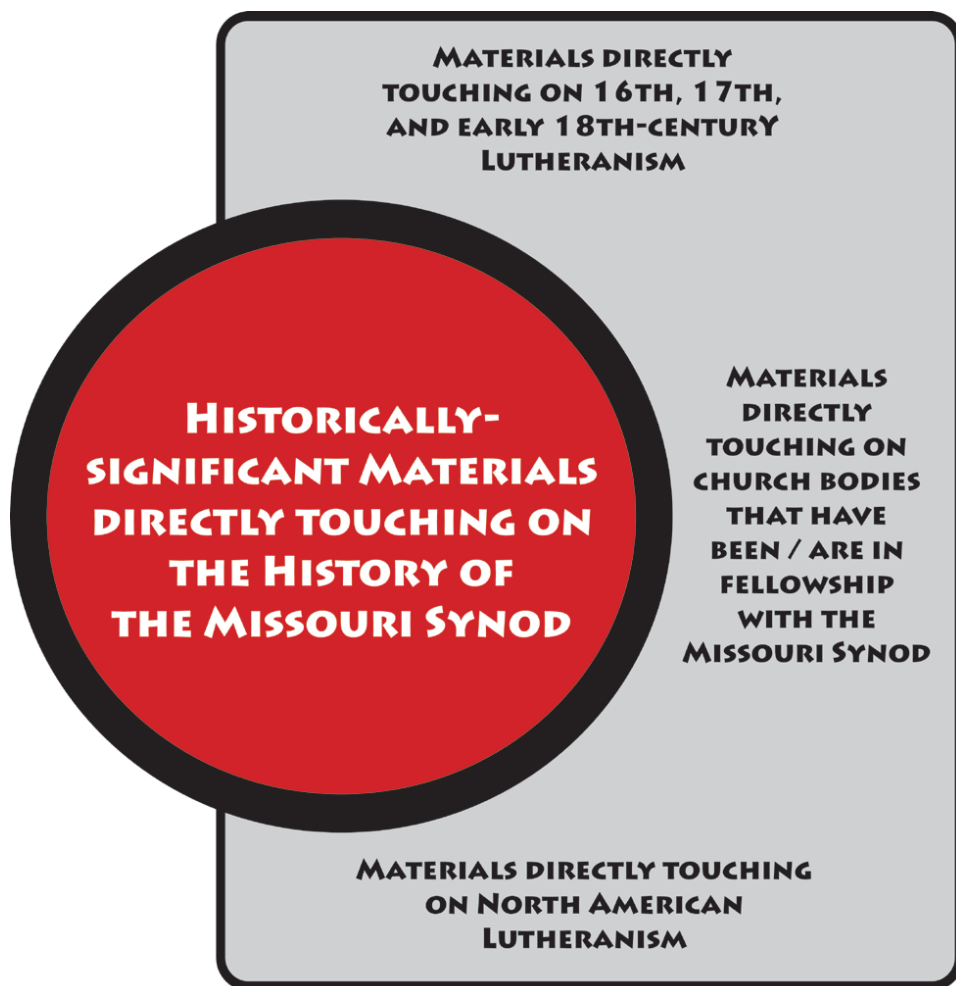
- (a) Department of Archives and History of the LCMS;
- (b) Library and Research Center on American Lutheranism; and
- (c) Museum on American Lutheranism



While the CHI Collection today reflects Dr. Suelflow’s desire to establish these broad branches, participants affirmed the belief that the core mission and vision of the Institute (dictating what will now be received into the collection) must continue to be only those historical materials that directly touch upon, or have been generated by, entities of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

This demands a completely new understanding of the “collections” under CHI’s care in order to implement a policy-based governance / best practices administration of CHI’s current and future holdings that is realistic, manageable, and sustainable.

What was an equally balanced three branch model becomes a concentric circle model that identifies / marks historical materials directly touching on the Missouri Synod and its history as core / primary (red zone); and historical materials directly touching on (a) 16th, 17th, and early 18th-century Lutheranism; (b) church bodies that have been or are in fellowship with the Missouri Synod; and (c) North American Lutheran entities as contextual / secondary (gray zone).



Note: Within this schema, 16th, 17th, and early 18th-century Lutheran material is tagged as secondary (gray zone) in so far as it frames / gives historical context to the more immediate history of the LCMS. Two points in this rationale: (1) the voluminous amount of 16th, 17th, and early 18th-century books the immigrants brought with them to Missouri, and (2) the large amount of space early LCMS publications dedicate to reciting the Lutheran “fathers” who had gone before.

Using this model the three branches of Concordia Historical Institute would continue to be (a) archival materials (primary - red zone), (b) published materials (primary - pink zone), and (c) artifacts and fine art (secondary - gray zone) — but each with the narrowly defined scope as dictated above.



This new understanding of collection scope will determine priorities when it comes to what specific materials are to be received into the collection as well as what specific materials are to be removed from the collection. In other words, what specific materials are to receive the highest priority and what specific materials are to receive the lowest priority (or highest priority in being deaccessioned).

Rationale: In light of (1) the limited staff and facility resources; (2) in keeping with the earlier collection scope of Concordia Historical Institute (pre-1948); (3) the primary charge given CHI in the LCMS Handbook; (4) the un-sustainability of curating materials that are not directly related to the Missouri Synod or curating materials that are easily accessible through other established archival institutions and libraries, and (5) the kinds of users / researchers CHI is charged to serve, be it

Resolved, that the core / primary scope of Concordia Historical Institute shall be those historically significant materials (documents, published works, photographs, audio-visual materials, artifacts, fine art, and electronic documents) that have been generated by or directly touch upon the history of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Moreover, historical materials that posses synod-level (church-body level) significance are to be given the highest priority concerning their collection, preservation, organization, cataloging, digitization, and discoverability as part of the CHI Collection. Be it further

Resolved, that the contextual / secondary scope of the Institute shall be those historically significant materials that either (1) directly touch upon 16th, 17th, or early 18th-century Lutheranism, (2) directly touch upon church bodies that have been / are in fellowship with the Missouri Synod; or (3) directly touch upon North American Lutheranism.

— Motion enacted by the CHI Board of Governors at their November 2021 Meeting

5. Appraisal of Possible Acquisitions

Appraisal of possible items to be brought into the CHI Collection are carried out under the document: “Appraisal and Acquisition Guidelines.” Acquisitions to the CHI Collection must meet the following seven criteria:

- a. Items must be directly relevant to the Institute’s mission, vision, and consistent with the purpose and activities of the institution, which chiefly consist of research, preservation, education, and exhibition.
- b. The Institute must be able to responsibly care for the items accepted into its Collection per approved professional standards.
- c. It is intended items brought into the Collection remain in the Collection as long as they retain their physical integrity and relevance to the Institute’s mission, vision, purposes, and activities.
- d. Title to objects should be received free of restrictions of use and future disposition. Materials that are offered for donation into the CHI Collection that come with restrictions (perpetual display in the CHI lobby, permission by family needed for researcher access, etc.) will not be accepted into the CHI Collection.
- e. The present owner should be able to verify ownership or be able to provide object provenance.
- f. Materials donated must be received with a properly filled-out and signed Receiving Record by the owner of the donated materials.
- g. The Institute will not accept any objects where the cost of conservation or care is disproportionate to the historical significance of the object.

6. Acquisition for the CHI Collection

CHI acquires materials for its Collection via donation, purchase or transfer.

“Is the item being considered something that is appropriate to the CHI collection?”

This question is answered by CHI’s definition of scope, in relation to (a) overall historical significance of the item, as well as (b) the significance of its relationship to the rest of the acquisition, and the scope of the CHI Collection.

7. Accessioning of Materials for the Collection

Specific accession procedures are carried out under the document *Concordia Historical Institute Accessioning Manual*, written by Bonnie Schmidt and revised by Todd D. Zittlow (2018). The *Concordia Historical Institute Accessioning Manual* shall be reviewed and updated as necessary by the Executive Director with the archive staff every three years.

8. Formats of Archival and Published Materials

CHI collects / receives a variety of formats among its archival materials (one-of-a-kind materials), and published materials (materials produced in multiple copies). Basic formats include documents, publications, photographs, audio-visual materials, artifacts, fine art, as well as microform and electronic documents.

9. Museum Props

These items are not part of the CHI Collection and are therefore not accessioned. Their continued use is determined by an active or future need in a program or exhibit. If not in active use, these materials are disposed of or stored outside of environmentally controlled Collection storage areas. CHI no longer collects / receives props.

10. Electronic/Digital Materials

CHI strongly recommends digitally born documents be printed and organized into archival file folders and boxes before donating both printed and electronic versions of the documents to the CHI collection.

11. Geography

The primary / core geographic scope of collecting / receiving are geographic areas in which the Missouri Synod was / is active, including domestic and international mission work. The secondary geographic scope includes (a) North America, (b) European and Scandinavian countries in which Lutheran churches were / are active, and (c) geographic areas in which church bodies in fellowship with the Missouri Synod have been / are active.

12. Time Period

Collections span the period from the time of the 16th century Reformation to the present. Primary / core materials are from the time of the Saxon immigration (1838–1839) to the present. Secondary materials range from the time of Martin Luther to the present.

13. Language

A significant portion of the CHI collection — especially from North America — is made up of German-language materials. Since WWI more and more archival and published material was produced in English. Materials from ethnic entities (Slovak, Polish, Latvian, Danish, Swedish, etc.) make use of languages other than / in addition to English. Materials from Missouri Synod mission fields also contain a rich variety of languages.

14. Major Subject Areas

Some subject areas represented in the CHI Collection build on existing strengths of the collection, while others outline more recent initiatives that help develop the CHI Collection. Subject areas represented in the core scope of the Collection include:

- a. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and Its Entities (individual church workers and administrators, events, districts, congregations, educational institutions, mission work, programs, etc.)

- b. The Saxon Immigration of 1838–1839
- c. C. F. W. Walther (1811–1887)
- d. “Old Lutherans”
- e. “Confessional Lutheranism”
- f. Lutheranism in major cities in the United States (Saint Louis, Milwaukee, Chicago, Philadelphia, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Baltimore, etc.)

15. Procedures and Documentation in Receiving Items for the Collection

The CHI Archivist evaluates items from potential donors in accordance with the CHI Collection Scope and Criteria for Collections, noting specific condition and provenance. Once an item is accepted into the Collection, a Receiving Record (Donor Agreement) is filled out and signed by the donor. The Institute receives all donations or transfers as unrestricted gifts which may be used in any manner that is deemed to be in the best interest of the Institute and its Collection, in accordance with its Collections Policy, including the management, access, exhibition, conservation and disposition of the objects(s) gifted.

16. Deaccessioning Items in the CHI Collection

If material is accepted into the collection, a maximum of 2-3 copies of any individual item shall be retained (more copies of a published work may be retained if the published item is marked as an artifact based on marginalia, signature, etc.). Exceptions will be made by the Executive Director in consultation with the CHI Archivist and CHI Cataloger based on rarity, age, condition, as well as overall historical significance of the item, the significance of its relationship to the rest of the acquisition, and the scope of the CHI Collection.

Duplicates, items outside the collection scope, and other unwanted items donated with archival and manuscript collections shall be deaccessioned and disposed of in strict accordance with the stipulations of the Receiving Record (Donation Agreement).

In the absence of a Receiving Record for a specific item, the CHI archivist, in consultation with the Executive Director, will exercise best practices and professional judgment as to appropriate deaccessioning and disposition of the item. A log of deaccessioned items will be strictly kept.

17. Criteria for Deaccessioning

Items being considered for deaccessioning must meet the following criteria:

- a. The object or document no longer has relevance to the Institute's mission, vision, and collections goals
- b. The object or document does not fit within the Institute's collection scope
- c. The object or document has deteriorated beyond its usefulness
- d. A similar item of superior condition or provenance has been acquired by the Institute

18. Process of Deaccessioning Items in the CHI Collection

The disposal of a deaccessioned item is carefully considered by the CHI Archivist, CHI Cataloger (in the case of deaccessioned publications), in consultation with the Executive Director. An attempt to locate a new home for the item should be pursued. The following are the acceptable methods of disposal of deaccessioned items:

- a. Transfer: Items may be transferred to another archive, museum, or educational facility (for example, an LCMS district archive or an LCMS university or high school). The transfer must be documented by the CHI Archivist and CHI Director.
- b. Exchange: Deaccessioned items in the CHI Collection may be exchanged for other items owned by another archive, museum, or educational facility that are more appropriate to the CHI collection scope.

- c. Auction: Deaccessioned items from the CHI Collection may be auctioned to the highest bidder in a public sale.
- d. Disposal: If all attempts to find a more suitable home for the item—whether by transfer, exchange, or auction—have been unsuccessful, a deaccessioned item may be disposed of in a responsible way.

19. Use of Proceeds Derived from Deaccessions

All profit from the sale of deaccessioned items from the CHI Collection must be used for collections acquisitions or the care of items in CHI's current Collection.

20. Clientele Served by the CHI Collection

Clientele who make use of the CHI Collection are divided into the following five categories, (a) internal CHI staff, (b) internal LCMS synodical and district level researchers, (c) local congregational church workers and administrators, (d) individuals who have Missouri Synod ancestors, and (e) those conducting research on miscellaneous topics that touch on Missouri Synod or North American Lutheranism.

21. Loans into the CHI Collection - Policy

The Institute may borrow objects from individuals or other institutions for research or exhibit purposes. Responsibility for items loaned to the Institute rests with the Institute's Executive Director and CHI Archivist.

The duration of each loan should be appropriate for its specific purpose. Loans should not exceed an initial term of five (5) years, with subject to renewal if agreed upon by both parties. The CHI Board of Governors must approve loan terms that exceed five years. It is CHI Collection Management Policy not to accept permanent loans.

It is the responsibility of the Lender to notify the Institute of changes in the Lender's contact information. Objects and documents left

with CHI for longer than five (5) years will be considered abandoned property. At that time steps may be taken according to Missouri State Abandoned Property Law to acquire title to the item.

Items loaned to the Institute will receive the same standard of care afforded to objects in the CHI Collection. Items deemed too unstable to withstand transit or display will not be accepted as a loan. The Lender should have clear title and ownership of the object before signing loan agreements with the Institute.

22. Loans into the CHI Collection - Procedures

Sometimes items need to be loaned in order to conduct research or to complete a museum exhibit. If the CHI staff believes that a loan request from another archive, library, educational institution, or individual is warranted, a formal written request by the Executive Director is to be sent to the potential lender or lending institution, detailing the specific conditions under which CHI is requesting a loan.

An official Incoming Loan Agreement with object description, insurance value and loan dates will be signed by the lender and the CHI Executive Director once an item has been identified for loan. The CHI Archivist will work with the lender to coordinate shipping. The loan's arrival at the Institute will be documented with a Receipt and a detailed condition report (including photographs). Copies of the Loan Agreement, Receipt and Condition Report will be mailed to the Lender.

23. Loans out of the CHI Collection - Policy

Requests for loans of items in the CHI Collection must be presented formally, in writing to the Executive Director and CHI Board of Governors. The Institute lends objects to established and reputable archives, museums, and educational institutions for the purpose of exhibition or research. Under no circumstances does the Institute loan to individuals. The Institute loans items for a period of five (5) years or less. Items that are fragile or could be damaged during

transit or display will not be available for loan. Written assurance of environmental controls, care of the item during the time of the loan, and proof of liability insurance must be presented before the item is loaned.

24. Loans out of the CHI Collection - Procedures

To request an object for loan, a letter on the requesting archive's / museum's / educational institution's letterhead should be directed to the Executive Director. This letter must mention the item being requested, purpose, length of loan and guarantee the coverage of costs associated with crating, shipping, insurance and any damage or wear incurred during the period of the loan. If approved the borrowing institution's loan form will be signed by the Executive Director. The borrower will also sign and CHI will counter-sign an Outgoing Loan Agreement. The item is to be photographed and any previous damage before the loan takes place is to be noted in detail.

Costs associated with an agreed upon shipping method will be paid for by the borrowing institution. The Institute also requests a Condition Report from the borrowing museum upon the arrival of the shipment.

Any damage to an item loaned by the Institute must be reported to the Executive Director when discovered, and the lending archive, museum, or educational institution will be responsible for all conservation costs.

25. Ongoing Care and Conservation of the CHI Collection

The ongoing care of items in the CHI Collection is the first priority of the CHI staff. The Institute recognizes its ethical and legal responsibility to care for all items in its Collection in a responsible and appropriate manner. As funds are available, volumes and documents of the highest level of value and historical significance should be conserved in order to stabilize and prolong their life.

A regularly reviewed and updated list of candidates for conservation shall be kept by the CHI Archivist and Executive Director.

26. Scheduled Inventory of Collection Items

It is the responsibility of the CHI staff to conduct scheduled inventories of the Institute's holdings. This insures the reporting of missing items, misplaced / mis-filed items, items that have become damaged or deteriorated, as well as items that have never been properly accessioned or cataloged.

27. Access to and use of Material from the CHI Collection - Policy

The Institute makes its Collection available for study and academic research under its Access and Use Policy.

The Institute recognizes its responsibility to grant reasonable access to items in its Collection for study and research. However, the safety and integrity of the items in its care is of the utmost importance. Access will be granted in keeping with professional, ethical guidelines and the Institute's charge to safeguard the Collection from loss, deterioration or damage.

28. Access to and use of Material from the CHI Collection - Procedures

All requests for access to research material should be submitted in writing to CHI's Research and Reference Supervisor for review and approval. The type of object being researched and dates and times available for visitation should be included in the request.

The Research and Reference Supervisor grants approval to the request, informs the researcher of any necessary fees, and schedules times the requested material will be available in the Research area. If the request will be handled electronically, then the Supervisor will advise the researcher if the researcher's deadlines can be met.

All researchers requesting access to the CHI Collection must fill out and sign a Memorandum of Understanding that reviews how the material is to be used, provisions for photographing items from the Collection, fees for obtaining photocopies / digital photos of archival documents, and other general archive access and research guidelines.

29. Access to and use of “Restricted Use” and “Permanently Sealed” Material in the CHI Collection

A donor (or the Executive Director) may, from time to time, designate documents in the CHI Collection as sensitive nature as “Closed for Research” for (a) a specifically designated period of ten to thirty years from the date they were given; or (b) until the death of the donor. These designations must be clearly spelled out in writing. Documents that have been designated “restricted” are to be clearly sealed and labeled as such.

Other documents in the CHI Collection are designated “Permanently Sealed” and may only be opened by LCMS officers after having been granted permission to view the files by the LCMS Board of Directors. These materials must always be clearly labeled, physically separate from other archival materials, and be placed in a highly secure location within the CHI building.

30. Photography of Items from the Collection for Publication or Commercial Use

Policy regarding the photography of items from the collection should be reviewed by CHI staff before access of material begins. Any images intended for publication (including publication on the web) or commercial use is subject to review by the Executive Director before permission is granted.

31. Appraisals of Historical Items

It is the policy of the Institute not to provide monetary appraisals of historical items due to IRS guidelines outlining the inherent

conflict of interest archives and museums have in issuing appraisals. However, the Institute may provide contact information of professional appraisers to CHI clientele.

32. CHI Collection Items are Non-circulating

Items in the CHI Collection are non-circulating and must remain in the CHI building. Items are not to be taken out for display without written permission of the Executive Director.

33. Seeking Active Collaboration in Curating Specialized Collections

The Executive Director will seek out mutually beneficial collaborations with other established Lutheran archives and libraries (for example, the libraries of our two LCMS seminaries) to minimize overlap of very specialized collections that are easily available to LCMS leadership and historical researchers.

(Possible areas of investigation might include: Lutheran Hour program recordings, Lutheran Heritage published materials, etc.)

34. Specialized Collections: Reformation Numismatic Collection

The Reformation Coin and Medal Collection of Concordia Historical Institute (catalog published in 2016) is to be made discoverable and elements displayed in the CHI museum exhibits to give context and historical perspective on the history of Lutheranism in North America, specifically the history of the LCMS.

The CHI Reformation Coin and Medal Collection is to be utilized in establishing CHI as a primary resource in Reformation / Lutheran history as reflected in the hundreds of pieces in the collection, which date from the 1500's until the present.

An updated accessioning of new pieces to the collection, the photographing of new pieces, and the updating of the online catalog shall be performed every 3-5 years.

35. Non-CHI Archival Material Housed in the CHI Building

All archival material that is not the property of CHI shall be strictly inventoried (contents and condition), physically segregated in the CHI building, and included in a regularly updated “Non-CHI Archival Material in the CHI Building” database.

Signed agreements are to be a condition of non-CHI material being housed in the CHI building, including a waiver for CHI responsibility in the case of theft or damage to the material. The CHI Board of Directors, with the Executive Director, is to review this database at least every 5 years.

36. Conflicts of Interest Disclosure

All Institute board members, the executive director, and all Institute staff are to annually review and sign a Conflict of Interest agreement.



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