



## **DOMINICAN SISTERS OF HOUSTON**

### **Archives Access Policies**

The Archives is open to researchers, including those outside The Dominican Sisters of Houston. We are committed to providing open access to our collections as far as possible within the limits of privacy, confidentiality, and preservation. All researchers will be granted access to all open collections, and to open portions of partially restricted collections. Anyone seeking permission to consult restricted items should submit a written proposal to the archivist, who will bring the request to the attention of Council.

These access policies apply to all persons outside of Council and all offices, departments, task forces, etc. associated with the Dominican Sisters of Houston. Council will have access to all material in the Archives. Administrative offices will have access to all materials transferred to the Archives by their office/department, etc.

1. All researcher, both internal and external, must make an appointment with the archivist at least 48 hours in advance. External researchers should submit a request form. This allows the archivist time to prepare and review materials for possible restrictions. External researcher may also be asked to provide a photo ID upon arrival.
2. All archival materials used for research are to remain in the archival reading room. Internal researchers requesting to borrow materials must consult with the archivist and sign items out if approved.
3. Only the archivist and Council are permitted to access the Archives. The Archives is to always remain locked and secure.
4. All collections shall remain closed until they are adequately reviewed, arranged and/or described.
5. Corporation Minutes, Chapter Minutes, and Council Minutes are available only to members of Council or those personally authorized by them. They will be opened for research 30 years after meetings take place.
6. Records containing a high percentage of personal information such as correspondence and reports shall remain closed for 10 years, unless otherwise specified by the donor. However, certain reviewed information from these files can be supplied by the archivist.

7. Deceased Sisters' personnel files are closed for a 60-year period after the date of death. The archivist will supply researchers with basic biographical data (place and date of birth and death, cause of death as listed on the death certificate, personal history, awards, etc.). Published articles, biographical notes, or papers written by the deceased Sister are also available to researchers. Any personal letters to family members or others, shall remain closed for 10 years after the date of death. Medical records, if kept, are closed. Researchers interested in doing a statistical study employing these files should submit a detailed proposal to the archivist with a discussion on how confidential information in the files will be protected.
8. Personal Papers/Creative Works, Oral Histories, etc. by individual Sisters are open according to the donation agreement signed by each Sister.
9. Academic transcripts from Dominican College are made available to former students or other institutions upon receipt of a written release signed by the former student. These records are closed to other outside researchers.
10. Individuals who have withdrawn from the Dominican Sisters may have access to their personnel file after notification of a member of Council. Personnel files must be reviewed in the presence of a member of Council. Personal and/or academic evaluations, for which the former Sister forfeited her right to see, shall be removed from the file prior to the review. Parts of these files may also be restricted by clergy-counselor privilege. The file is closed permanently to all others.
11. Personnel records of former employees are generally destroyed seven years after termination of employment with the Dominican Sisters. If retained for some outstanding reason, these shall remain closed permanently. The only information released will be a verification of employment, position held and employment dates. Former employees may see their files in the presence of a member of the Human Resources Department. Personal and/or academic evaluations, for which the former employee forfeited his right to see, will be removed from the file prior to the review.
12. Access to collections does not automatically include permission to publish. A separate form requesting permission and to quote is necessary.
13. Administrative records of sponsored schools, not containing materials dealing with the personal or academic evaluation of students are open for research. Faculty meeting minutes, grade sheets, and other records identified as containing personal and/or academic evaluative materials will be screened and removed prior to access. Any materials containing student grades will be restricted until her/his death or 75 years after the document's date as per the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

14. Due to the diverse and at times highly sensitive material contained in the records of departments and offices, access to these files is determined on an individual basis. The files are always open to the donating office but closed to all other researchers for at least 30 years.
15. To appeal the access policies, a written request should be addressed to the Archivist. The appeal will be sent to Council for further action. The request should state the nature of the project and why access to a certain group of records is essential to that project. The request should also address the issue of how confidentiality will be maintained if access is granted.