

# **International Archive of Women in Architecture**

## **A Collection Development Statement<sup>1</sup>**

submitted by Gail McMillan, IAWA Archivist  
Director Digital Library and Archives  
University Libraries, Virginia Tech  
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The International Archive of Women in Architecture is a joint initiative of the College of Architecture and Urban Studies and the University Libraries. The purpose of the IAWA is to document women's involvement in architecture, the built environment, and design in order to fill serious gaps in the availability of primary research materials for architectural, women's, and social history research. The IAWA collects appropriate papers, materials and artifacts (primary resources) of women architects and landscape architects; industrial, construction, and interior designers; urban planners, architectural historians, patrons, teachers, photographers, writers, critics, and others whose life and work relate to women in architecture, the built environment, and the design fields.

The Archive is overseen by an elected Board of Advisors, women and men in these fields from around the world and librarians and administrators from Virginia Tech. The advisors actively support the Archive by

- identifying women who should be represented in the Archive
- soliciting their collections
- encouraging use of the Archive
- attracting financial resources to sustain and enhance the Archive

The historical resources are housed, organized, preserved, and made accessible by the University Libraries through the Digital Library and Archives, whose director or her designee serves as the Archivist for the IAWA.

Biographical information as well as books and other published materials (secondary resources) supplement the collection and support its function as a clearinghouse and research center for information about women in architecture, the built environment, and related design areas, past and present.

### **DISTINCTIONS**

Initially the IAWA focused on collecting the papers of women who practiced at a time when there were few women in the field (i.e., before the 1950's). Since its founding in 1985 the IAWA has grown to include many unique and diverse materials documenting the creative process by women in architecture. Many prominent people and organizations have contributed to the

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<sup>1</sup> Developed from the IAWA Board of Advisors' meetings on Sept. 25, 1998 and Sept. 9, 2000.

strength of the Archive and now over 250 women architects and designers and the records of their professional organizations from around the world are represented in International Archive of Women in Architecture.

## **RESEARCH**

The Archive includes correspondence, drawings, blueprints, sketches, manuscripts, publications, individual projects, and works that document entire careers and organizations. Primary research materials (those original and unique documents) typically preserved in the archive include architectural drawings, photographs and slides, correspondence, and job files. As the clearinghouse of information about all women in architecture, the IAWA also collects additional materials such as biographical information, publications, and exhibitions (i.e., secondary research materials). Through many significant and diverse donations of primary and secondary materials from their creators, heirs and family members, colleagues, researchers, and collectors, the Archive has become a tremendous historical resource, housing approximately 260 collections spanning over 825 cu. ft. It continues to grow in significance through international, national, regional, and local donations.

## **COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT**

1. **CRITERIA FOR INCLUSION:** The Archive has and continues to seek both early and contemporary material documenting the contributions of women to architecture, the built environment, and design fields. The Archives emphasizes materials associated with pioneers in architecture (i.e., pre-1950) because these materials will disappear first. Original and unique (i.e., primary) materials are the most sought after. Limited editions are also desirable.
2. **SOLICITATION:** Gift solicitation is the process of seeking gifts from donors. One responsibility of the Advisors is to seek materials for the Archive. The IAWA Archivist should be apprised of an Advisor's intent to approach potential donors of materials but especially before collections arrive at the library.
3. **NOMINATION:** A nomination procedure may be used to determine collections to pursue actively. Any member (i.e., Advisor, Friend, etc. of the IAWA) can nominate a person or organization whose materials are deemed appropriate for the Archive. The nomination should include a rationale for how the resources correspond with the Archive's purpose, how it is anticipated that they will enhance the historical value of the collection.
4. **NEGOTIATION:** Gift negotiation is the formal process of communicating with a donor. It involves details regarding issues such as use, donor recognition, and expenses associated with acquiring the gift. The IAWA Archivist should be involved in negotiations for collections that may surpass the library's ability to appropriately house and preserve them. The head of the Digital Library and Archives and the library's development officer may also need to be involved in gift negotiations that include



physical materials to be curated by the library when financial support is also forthcoming.

5. **DEED OF GIFT:** A signed Deed of Gift [form] should accompany each donation, no matter how small or large. This officially transfers the materials to the IAWA and may address copyright. It is necessary for the DLA to have a signed Deed of Gift on file before a collection can be organized and described beyond an accession record.
6. **APPRAISAL:** Neither the University, the Library, or IAWA appraise gifts and they do not recommend appraisers. However, DLA can provide a list of appraisers who have worked with previous donors. It is best to have a gift appraised before it is donated with a copy of the appraisal accompanying the gift.

**BIOGRAPHICAL DATABASE:** The IAWA serves as a clearinghouse for information about all women in architecture, the built environment, and related design fields. The goal of the biographical database is to be an extensive record of these women; the Archive, on the other hand, preserves the physical evidence and records of their contributions. On the Web at [http://lumiere.lib.vt.edu/iawa\\_db/](http://lumiere.lib.vt.edu/iawa_db/) the IAWA Biographical Database can be both searched by any word in the database as well as browsed by name and country.

**PUBLICATIONS:** Documenting women's contributions to architecture, the built environment, and related design fields also includes identifying and, where possible, gathering publications (i.e., secondary resources) by and about them. Normally these should be unique items to the library's collections that will be cataloged and housed in the Rare Book Room. When duplicate copies are donated, they may be accepted for the main collection in Newman Library or the Art and Architecture Branch Library.

## EDUCATION

On the basis of its collections, the IAWA generates a variety of activities, including research, exhibitions, lectures, seminars, and symposia. At the tenth anniversary celebration of the Archive, for example, there was a symposium, *A Decade of Commitment*. Teaching and learning situations are often part of the annual meeting of the Board of Advisors. Practitioners and scholars come to Virginia Tech to meet with students and faculty in the College of Architecture and Urban Studies. The Special Collections Reading Room also hosts classes and individuals interested in the IAWA who are come to work with primary sources and learn about the precautions necessary for handling such unique and rare materials.

## EXHIBITIONS

The College of Architecture and Urban Studies and Newman Library have presented extensive exhibitions of donations from individual donors and from the American Institute of Architects donation such as *That Exceptional One*. Special Collections usually mounts an exhibit in



Newman Library for the annual fall meeting of the Board of Advisors such as the one replicated for continued online access at <http://spec.lib.vt.edu/exhibits/IAWA/window1/>. The Cowgill Hall lobby provides space for large exhibitions such as those that have celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of the founding of the Archive. Exhibitions in Cowgill have coincided with presentations by visiting practitioners and scholars such as Tony Wrenn, Lois Gottlieb, Brinda Somaya, and Rosario Piomellie.

## **FACILITIES**

The archive is housed largely in Digital Library and Archives' Special Collections in Newman Library while a few well documented collections are also housed at the specially designed Storage Facility about one mile from the main Virginia Tech campus. Both facilities have appropriate temperature and humidity control and secure environments, and both are reaching their capacity. The library, therefore, must have the final determination about what collections it can afford to accept because it has the space to appropriately house, preserve, and oversee public access. The IAWA Board of Advisors or the local executive committee can expect to be consulted when the library is in a position to decline a gift for the IAWA.

The professional librarians and archivists and well-trained student assistants process, maintain, and provide access to the IAWA collections. Their work includes arranging, re-packaging in acid-free containers, describing and creating detailed inventories. They also respond to reference questions from library patrons both in the Special Collections Reading Room and remotely via mail, telephone, and high-speed Internet connections.

High-resolution scanning has been added to our preservation and access endeavors as DLA works with the highly skilled staff in the University's Digital Imaging unit. DI produces archival-quality TIFF images; security copies are frequently and regularly made to ensure their unadulterated quality. DLA staff derive smaller, web-friendly JPEG and GIF formats that the public access from the IAWA web site and through the VT ImageBase. All images are accompanied by appropriate descriptive data so that while sub-collections of image sets can be browsed, they can also be found through simple word searches.

## **PRIORITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

The IAWA focuses primarily on collecting the papers of those women who practiced at a time when there were few in the field (generally before the 1950s), usually working in architectural firms and yet not granted professional status or partnerships. In addition, the archive collects the works of women presently flourishing in architecture and related fields. Therefore, we acquire materials that directly address the purpose of the archives but that do not exceed the institution's ability to care for them appropriately or that have excessive or unmanageable donor restrictions. All materials in the IAWA become the property of the Archive.

