# STANDARD SERIES FOR ARCHITECTURE AND LANDSCAPE DESIGN RECORDS:
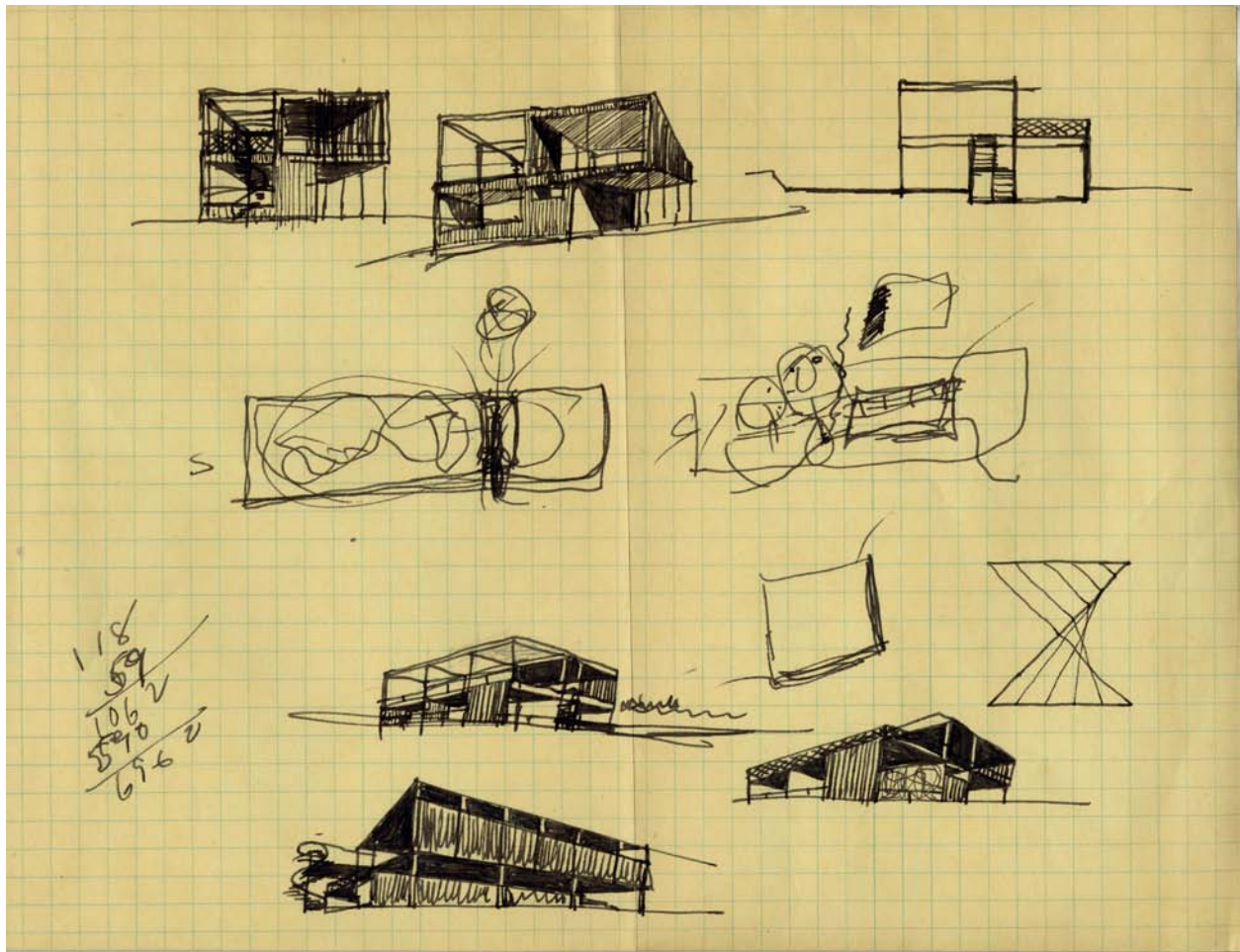## A TOOL FOR THE ARRANGEMENT AND DESCRIPTION OF ARCHIVAL COLLECTIONS

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**Cover Image:**  Donald Olsen Collection (2003-1)
                    *Birge Residence*
                    *Berkeley, CA 1953*

## FOREWORD

A **series** is a body of file units or documents arranged in accordance with a unified filing system or maintained as a unit by the organization or individual that created them because of some other relationship arising out of their creation, function, receipt, physical form, or use.

–Frederick M. Miller,
*Arranging and Describing Archives and Manuscripts*

This guide to standard series for architectural records was intended to provide a method to tame big, beautiful, and unwieldy collections of architectural records. It provides a framework to organize and describe papers and records created and collected by most architects, landscape architects, and architectural practices. It is not a full processing manual and should be used in conjunction with existing manuals such as the Society of American Archivists' *Arranging and Describing Archives and Manuscripts* as well as internal institutional procedures and policies. A glossary of architectural terms will also be useful to processors. An excellent example can be found in the "Definitions" section of *The Architect's Handbook of Professional Practice*, *Volume I* published by the American Institute of Architects.

These standard series are applicable to papers and records created by other professional practitioners. We developed them from the architectural collections comprising our holdings, understanding that with few or no modifications some or all of the standard series could be applied to other types of collections. These series are particularly appropriate for professionals including scientists, engineers, industrial designers, and other researchers who develop projects as part of their academic and/or professional practices. Many professionals spend time as faculty, patent an invention, write articles and make presentations, create or collect art; or do work that results in similar individual units such as projects, books, experiments, or case files.

These series and subseries are applicable to both traditional paper and encoded finding aids. The descriptive paragraphs within the series and subseries, while convenient for paper finding aids, are essential in an electronic environment that facilitates skipping scope and contents notes by allowing the user to link directly to series or container lists. Standard series and subseries, using consistent terms and placed in consistent order, also make it easier for the archivist to create and the researcher to use electronic finding aids.

Contrary to the APPM convention of distinguishing between personal papers, business records, and artificial collections, we have chosen to uniformly use the label Collection. Architectural collections often contain personal papers and business or institutional records. They also have a tendency to become somewhat "artificial" through additional donations of photographs or sets of plans for individual structures. For example, the Bernard Maybeck Collection contains personal and family papers, the records of the firm of Maybeck & White, and a number of additional donations. Rather than force the choice of the label "papers" or "records," we have preferred to use the generic term Collection, and allow the standard series to provide the differentiation between papers and records.

## INTRODUCTION

William W. Wurster/Wurster, Bernardi &
Emmons Collection (1976-2)
*San Francisco office*
*ca. 1938*

In 1997, the Environmental Design Archives (then College of Environmental Design Documents Collection) received a grant from the Getty Foundation for a two-year project to arrange and describe all of the collections held by the Archives. This work included the assessment and survey of all collections, basic preservation during processing, and description compatible with archival standards. The final product of this grant has been the creation of sixty-three print and EAD-encoded finding aids, and MARC cataloging of seventy collections. In addition, because the Archives had never had professional archival staff, the development of internal standards for arrangement and description was also a specific goal of the project.

Throughout the project the scarcity of donor records and muddled physical state of the collections hindered our efforts to establish intellectual control. Even determining a definitive list of collections proved a struggle. Single items had been counted as collections, and secondary records such as clippings were cataloged as if they were original drawings. Many collections had been scattered and filed by record type with little regard for the archival concepts of provenance or original order. Drawings were arranged by an arbitrary consecutive catalog number, with a card catalog serving as an index. Detailed item-level lists were created for these cataloged drawings, while the majority of the collections received little or no attention. Additional collections had been stored in various locations throughout the building, neglected and in some cases forgotten. The collections were archival in nature and in volume. The attempt to describe them at the item-level, as a museum might, had resulted in the majority of holdings being overlooked, unarranged, and inaccessible.

The need to process a large number of collections in a limited time combined with a desire to standardize the description of similar collections were the motivating factors in the creation of this system of standard series. Arrangement and description of these collections to the series level allowed us to reintegrate and process more collections than could have been completed at the folder- or project-level. It also conveys a hierarchy and context for the records. Creating a set of standards for

both arrangement and terminology has enhanced consistency across collections – a benefit to the processor, the reference archivist, and the researcher. We have also found that a series description, written thoughtfully as a miniature scope and contents note rather than a laundry list of record types, can help guide the researcher to relevant materials even where no folder list or project index exists. A series-level finding aid can serve as a preliminary step until the time and resources are available to add the next level of detailed description, or a final step for smaller, less significant collections.

These series were not created arbitrarily with an overzealous desire to force wonderfully diverse collections into the same limited mold. Rather, they reflect similarities found across the majority of our collections, pre- and post-World War II, architecture and landscape architecture alike. They are also based on an organization we observed in those collections that maintained the integrity of original order. The series follow an architect or firm's functions, while subseries can reflect either a record type or a specific activity within the larger function. For the most part, subseries are arranged hierarchically and original materials precede secondary materials. For example, correspondence precedes newspaper clippings. In some cases, researcher convenience has also guided us.

The series are equally useful for landscape architecture collections. Though architects and landscape designers work with different materials, the functions and records of both professions are very similar. This is particularly true in the modern era, where landscape is less about horticulture and more about design and structure. Even in the older landscape collections, the flexibility exists to accommodate records such as field notes, plant cards, and specimens. Throughout this text, references to architects and architecture can be assumed to include landscape architects as well.

## USING STANDARD SERIES
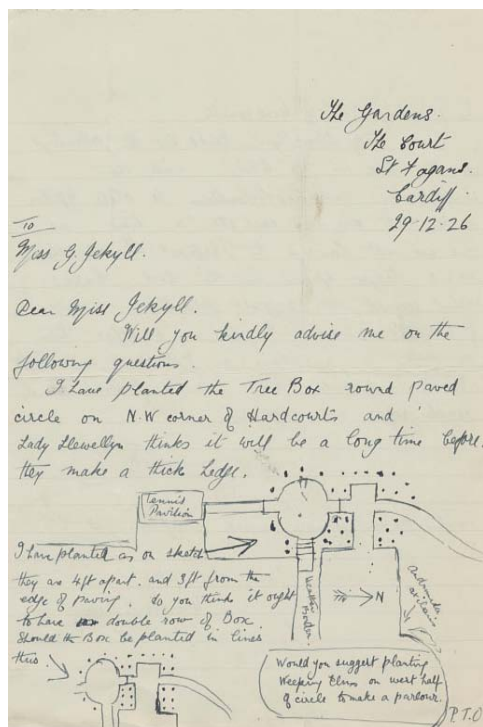


Gertrude Jekyll Collection (1955-1)
*Client correspondence*
*The Court*
*Cardiff,, England 1926*

The series listed below were not designed to be applied equally to every collection. Instead, use them flexibly, utilizing only those series and subseries necessary. However, within a repository it is desirable to maintain consistency across collections, particularly in regards to the order of series and subseries that are used. Beginning processors should remember that series and subseries are *cohesive* groups of records – the existence of correspondence scattered throughout a series does not constitute a correspondence subseries.

A "unique subseries" is listed at the end of each series to allow flexibility in describing collections. In practice, the unique subseries is named appropriately for the materials then arranged within the series, not necessarily at the end. Arrange the new subseries according to original order or logically within the hierarchy if original order has been erased.

The question of whether or not to apply a certain series or subseries depends on the original order and in some cases the extent of the materials in question. For example, in a small collection that shows no evidence of original order, a single folder of general office correspondence could be included at the beginning of Project Records, instead of creating a separate series for it. In other cases, a subseries may be large enough to warrant the creation of a new series. The Garrett Eckbo collection contains a large series of Writings, which in most cases would constitute a subseries within the Professional Papers.

Again, subseries are meant to be used flexibly. A specific subseries, particularly those based on record type, might be applicable to a number of different series. If a series is small or contains only one record type, subseries need not be listed at all. In smaller series, particularly where no original order exists, the list of subseries can provide a guide for folder arrangement even though specific subseries need not be enumerated.

When a collection's original order is evident and usable, apply series and subseries selectively, as they follow the original order. The standard series can help

the processor recognize the types of records that exist, and provide a standard terminology for establishing the existing series and subseries. Subseries can be rearranged if necessary to follow original order, and the use of unique subseries can help to maintain original order when a firm's practices for keeping office and project records varied from the standard. Keep in mind that we are not encouraging the processor to destroy original order where it exists in a usable form for the archivist and researcher.

These series can be even more useful in the arrangement of collections that show no evidence of original order. The series and subseries that we have enumerated can help to answer the question, "How might this architect have arranged and used these records?" They can be used to assist the processor in identifying the types of materials in a collection, recognizing groups of records in which original order may yet exist, and establishing an arrangement that reflects the records as they might have been used originally. Whether original order is preserved or a usable order created, the series description should explain to the researcher what that order is and how it can be used.



Garrett Eckbo Collection (1990-1)
*Mineral King Cooperative Ranch*
*(for the Farm Security Administration)*
*Tulare Basin, CA 1939*

## I. PERSONAL PAPERS
   A. Biographical Information
   B. Diaries
   C. Correspondence
   D. Student Work
   E. Travel
   F. Photographs
   __ Unique Subseries

*Examples include:* Family Papers, Military Service, Sketchbooks, Datebooks, and Writings

Personal papers are records created outside of the architect's professional sphere, and document activities such as hobbies, family life, friendships, etc. The series also contains some records that may appear to document the architect's career, such as student work and travel. Student work, though related to architecture, is located in this series because it was created before the architect's career began and not as part of the career itself. Records related to travel, such as diaries, sketches, and photographs, are located in this series for the same reason, even though architects often travel in order to study architecture. This is particularly true in the Beaux-Arts tradition of education, which often encouraged a grand tour of Europe to study historical styles. It would be difficult to determine, however, whether an architect's travels were solely in the pursuit of either formal or informal architectural education.

## PROFESSIONAL PAPERS
   A. Correspondence
   B. Writings
   C. Presentations
   D. Associations and Committees
   E. Awards
   F. Research Notes
   G. Reference Files
   __ Unique Subseries

*Examples include:* Consulting, Jurying, Faculty Papers, Photographs, Patents, and Faculty Papers (if too small a quantity to warrant an entire series)

Professional papers include any records created by the architect in service to the profession. That is, records related to the field, but not created by the architect or firm as part of the business or design and construction processes. We initially struggled with the arrangement of these types of records, as they seem to fall somewhere between personal life and office activities. We eventually settled on the creation of a separate series, and used the term "papers" to indicate that although these materials document professional activities, they were created and organized less formally than business records.

Examples of professional papers are writings on topics like architectural theory and criticism, speeches given at architecture schools and architectural meetings, and records relating to professional associations such as the American Institute of Architects and American Society of Landscape Architects. Additional activities encompassed by this series include jurying, consulting work, research on architectural topics, and civic involvement relating to issues such as planning and the environment. Reference files refer to clippings and other printed material related to architectural topics that were collected by the architect.

**III. FACULTY PAPERS**
  A.  Administrative
  B.  Course Materials
  C.  Research Notes
  D.  Reference Files
  E.  Students' Works
  __  Unique Subseries
*Examples include:* Faculty Committees

Because schools of architecture hire practicing designers as instructors, many architects also have records related to teaching. Course materials, such as syllabi, lecture notes, exams, and assignments are often interfiled and arranged by course number. A faculty member may have also kept records relating to the administration of the department, research and reference materials, and photographs or other copies of work created by their students. If there are very few faculty papers, they can be arranged as a subseries within Professional Papers.

The subseries Research Notes and Reference Files are each listed under Faculty Papers and under Professional Papers because these types of records may be created in either role. It is often difficult to determine if research and reference materials were created specifically for teaching, unless the architect taught a course that is related to the topic covered. In a case where a collection contains no other Professional Papers, it also makes sense to arrange these records within the Faculty Papers as opposed to creating a separate series. Common sense, and knowledge of the collection in question, will determine where these records should be located.

**IV. OFFICE RECORDS**
  A.  Administrative
  B.  Correspondence
  C.  Financial Records
  D.  Public Relations
  E.  Photographs
  F.  Presentation Materials
  G.  Clippings and/or Scrapbooks
  __  Unique Subseries
*Examples include:* Appointment Books, Clipbooks, Product Literature, Models, and Prospects

This series encompasses the records created by the architectural firm in any capacity other than the design and construction of projects. Examples include administrative, accounting, and marketing functions. The subseries Public Relations is used to describe activities that disseminate information about the firm, and can include a variety of records such as correspondence regarding the publishing of an architect's work, brochures, and other promotional materials.

Office records may include materials that refer to projects, but that were created or collected for functions other than project design and construction. For example, modern firms commonly keep separate photograph files of finished projects for marketing purposes. Presentation materials are another example of project-related records that are arranged as Office Records. These can include presentation drawings, models, and other materials created in order to win a project or exhibit boards and mounted photos that were created to market a firm after the project was completed.

**V. PROJECT RECORDS**
   A.  Project Lists
   B.  Files
   C.  Photographs
   D.  Drawings
   __  Unique Series
*Examples include:* Specifications, Contracts, Models, and Reports

Project records are all records created by a firm as part of its primary functions - design and construction - and includes records relating to unbuilt projects and competitions. This will likely be the largest series in a collection, and will be the most consistent in its contents and arrangement from one collection to another. Project records are usually arranged alphabetically by project name or by project number (also referred to as job number). The use of a chronological project number, beginning with the two-digit year, to identify and organize project records is particularly common after World War II, because of the growth in the size of firms, the complexity of projects, and the amount of records generated.

Project Lists are located at the beginning to serve as an index, especially where job numbers are used for arrangement. Files may include notes, correspondence, specifications, reports, and vendor/contractor information, though some architects will file a specific record type (i.e. specifications) separately. Again, the unique subseries can be used to accommodate original order in this case. Some collections may have folded drawings included in the project files. Ideally, these should be removed for humidification and flattening and stored separately. Until the resources are available, the existence of these drawings within the project files can be noted in the series description.

Note that Photographs are listed as a subseries both under Office Records and Project Records, and may be arranged under either series. In our collections of modern records, where the original order was intact, finished project photographs were filed separately from the project records, and therefore were maintained in the Office Records series. These collections often had snapshots of the construction process interfiled with correspondence, notes, and other materials within the project files and these "progress photographs" were not separated. Many of our early 20th century collections had no ascertainable original order, however, and in this case we arranged both construction and finished project photographs in the Project Records series for researcher convenience. Project slides can be arranged in either series as well, and can be described either as a separate subseries or within the Photographs subseries.

In some cases, many different series of project records may exist. For example, if a single architect worked for a number of different firms during his career, you may wish to create a series for each firm's project records, with the series listed chronologically by firm. Many single institutions document multiple structures over time, and a number of different individuals and firms may be involved with the same building. In this situation, the primary unit becomes the specific building or landscape feature as opposed to a specific architect. Thus, each building is a series while subseries are based on phase or architectural firm. Within this framework, the same types of records are generated.

## VI. MAJOR PROJECTS
    A. Files
    B. Photographs
    C. Drawings
    __ Unique Series
*Examples include:* Specifications, Contracts, Models, and Reports

This series includes project records for any major projects completed by the architect or firm. It can also be used for a number of different buildings completed for the same client. For example, the John Galen Howard collection contains a number of projects completed for the University of California, Berkeley and these are arranged as a separate series (see Appendices). The title of the series should be the same as the project title. The subseries will be similar to those for the series Project Records.

The question of whether to treat a large project as a separate series should be based on original order. Do not separate major projects if the architect originally filed them within the other project files. If no original order is evident, the decision should be primarily influenced by the scope of the records that document the project. Projects that may warrant their own series often consist of many individual buildings completed over time for the same client, such as a campus, major estate, or exposition.

## VII. ART & ARTIFACTS

This series was established to describe artworks created or collected by the architect, as well as office furniture and other artifacts. Examples from our collections include a small bronze by Arthur Putnam, bookcases designed by architect Willis Polk, and the briefcase and boots of landscape architect Tommy Church.

## VII. ADDITIONAL DONATIONS

Many collections will include drawings or other records donated separately from the main body of the collection. We have created a specific series for these donations in order to maintain their provenance while avoiding the need for a separate finding aid. Each of these individual donations is given its own accession number, even though it is being described as part of the larger collection, and each donation is listed as an individual subseries. Additional donations may come from a friend or family member of the collection's creator, from homeowners donating the plans of their house, or from an engineer, landscape architect, or other architect who collaborated with the collection's creator.

## ELEMENTS OF SERIES-LEVEL DESCRIPTION

The series description serves as a list of series and subseries, and more importantly as an expanded account of the collection contents. It includes the series number, title, dates, and extent as well as an arrangement statement, descriptive paragraph, and subseries list. For large or significant subseries, the arrangement statement and descriptive paragraph may be included at the subseries level. (See Appendices for examples.)

The descriptive paragraph is basically a miniature scope and contents note. It will typically contain information relating to the types of records (unless this information is obvious from the subseries list), the subjects or activities documented in the series, and any strengths or weaknesses in the records. Names of significant correspondents, clients, collaborators, or projects may also be pointed out here.

## TAKING IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL: THE FOLDER LIST AND PROJECT INDEX

As we have said, a series-level finding aid is often a preliminary step until the time and resources are available to add more detailed description. For large or significant collections, the next level of description can simplify the work of both researcher and archivist. This is particularly true given that homeowners and many other researchers are interested only in a single project.

Traditionally, the next hierarchical level of description is the folder, or container list. Attempting to reconcile this hierarchical approach with the unique nature of architectural records, where the focus is often on the project and records are frequently separated by format, created quite a challenge. Because project-related records can be in a number of different subseries, and
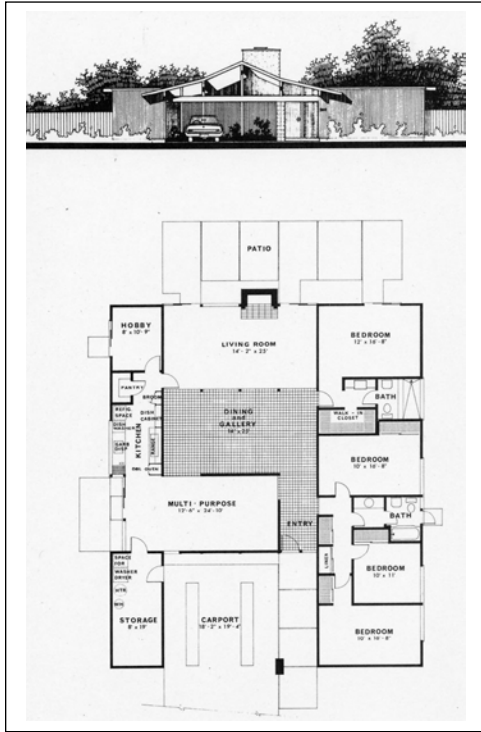
Oakland & Imada Collection (2002-3)
*Model Home for Eichler*
Saratoga, CA   c. 1965

even in separate series, they don't fit neatly within the archival hierarchy. In a standard container list, which follows the intellectual and/or physical order of the records, a project might appear in a number of different places, requiring the researcher to scan the entire list to find all of the records relating to a single project. Also, project-level description can include information that is not generally recorded on a container list, for example geographic location and type of project.

Our solution to this dilemma has been to create two distinct entities: the folder list and the project index. The folder list follows the standard format, listing the folders within the context of series and subseries and including the box and folder numbers, folder title, and dates of the records. It is used to describe the records that are not project-related, such as personal and professional papers, faculty records, and some office records. All of the series are listed on the folder list, however, those that contain project-related records refer the researcher to the project index.

The project index is an alphabetical list of projects, with additional descriptive data and pointers to any existing textual records, photographs, and drawings relating to that project. The basic descriptive information to be included at the project level are the job number, client and/or project name, geographic location, and date. Recording the type of project can also be useful for sorting or searching. Where the necessary resources and information are available, collaborating landscape architects or photographers could also be documented. The project index can be created using a spreadsheet or database program. See the John Galen Howard finding aid in the appendices for examples of a folder list and project index.

**PERSONAL PAPERS**

| | |
|---|---|
| Biographical Information | curriculum vitae, resumes, biographical narratives |
| Diaries | personal journals, diaries or notebooks |
| Correspondence | not related to the profession (i.e. with family or friends) |
| Student Work | renderings, drawings, exercises, class notes, papers, thesis |
| Travel | sketches, diaries, drawings, photographs, slides |
| Photographs | portraits, family, friends |
| Unique Subseries | family papers, military service, sketchbooks, datebooks, writings |

**PROFESSIONAL PAPERS**

| | |
|---|---|
| Correspondence | related to the profession (i.e. with other designers) |
| Writings | articles, manuscripts |
| Presentations | lectures, speeches |
| Associations and Committees | correspondence, minutes, reports |
| Awards | certificates, plaques |
| Research Notes | original notes on design topics being researched by the creator |
| Reference Files | articles, clippings, printed material, images, etc on design topics |
| Unique Subseries | consulting, jurying, faculty papers, photographs, patents |

**FACULTY PAPERS**

| | |
|---|---|
| Administrative | departmental policies, memoranda |
| Course Materials | syllabi, lecture notes, assignments, exams |
| Research Notes | original notes on design topics being researched by the creator |
| Reference Files | articles, clippings, printed material, images, etc on design topics |
| Students' Works | originals or reproductions of work by students |
| Unique Subseries | faculty committees |

**OFFICE RECORDS**

| | |
|---|---|
| Administrative | articles of incorporation, minutes of meetings, photographs of staff |
| Correspondence | general correspondence |
| Financial Records | ledgers |
| Public Relations | portfolios, brochures, correspondence with publishers |
| Photographs | project photographs |
| Presentation Materials | presentation boards, exhibit boards |
| Clippings and/or Scrapbooks | published material related to the designer, firm, or specific projects legal records, |
| Unique Subseries | appointment books, clipbooks, product literature, prospects |

**PROJECT RECORDS**

| | |
|---|---|
| Project Lists | job lists or other indexes created by the designer or firm |
| Files | correspondence, notes, reports, specifications, contracts, other textual records |
| Photographs | site, construction,  completed project photographs |
| Drawings | sketches, plans, elevations, presentation renderings, CAD files |
| Unique Subseries | contracts, specifications, reports |

**LARGE PROJECTS**

| | |
|---|---|
| Files | correspondence, notes, reports, specifications, contracts, other textual records |
| Photographs | site, construction,  completed project photographs |
| Drawings | sketches, plans, elevations, presentation renderings, CAD files |
| Unique Subseries | contracts, specifications, reports |

| | |
|---|---|
| **ART & ARTIFACTS** | Office furniture, collected or large personal art (i.e.paintings), drafting tools |
| **ADDITIONAL DONATIONS** | Any records donated from a source other than the primary donor |