

Robert D. Farber University Archives & Special Collections
Brandeis University
Access Policy for University Archives

General Policy on Access

Brandeis University Archives maintains the official records of the university that have been selected, preserved, and made accessible for their long-term historical research value. The department's policy for access to university records has been developed in accordance with best practices from industry scholars and associations, such as the Society of American Archivists and the International Council on Archives.

Brandeis University is a private institution of higher education, but the staff are guided by the principle that archival materials should be publicly accessible to the fullest extent possible. Every effort has therefore been made to ensure that any restrictions on archival records are minimized, appropriate, reasonable, well-documented, and equitably enforced. Restrictions on university records may be imposed by a law, regulation, donor, the university office from which the records originated, or the Archives staff.

Access Categories for University Records

Open Records - Available to the general public, but access may be limited due to the physical condition of the records

Restricted Records - Access is limited due to the physical condition of the records and/or its information content

Closed Records - Access is prohibited for a specified period of time

Types of Restrictions on University Records

A restriction may be placed on an entire collection, a group of folders, a folder of records, one or more records in a folder, or part of a record. Records with a time-based restriction will become available to the public after a certain number of years have passed since the date that the records were created or donated. Records with an event-based restriction will become available to the public after the occurrence of an event, such as a publication or the death of a person. A restriction may also be based on the specific use of a record or on the method of access, which may be due to the size, weight, or photosensitivity of an item, or due to the technologies that are available in the Archives department.

A restriction may be placed on a record if the content is private, confidential, or sensitive. If a record is fragile, every effort will be made to enable the information content of the record to be accessed.

Unprocessed materials may be open for research with permission of the Archives staff. Access to any records may not be possible if a researcher cannot provide photo identification to a staff member in the Brandeis University Archives & Special Collections department or if a researcher has endangered the safety of the materials or violated any of the policies and regulations of the Archives. There may also be physical records that can be accessed in-person, but that cannot be digitized and sent electronically to a researcher.

Access to Brandeis University Records

If the records have a restriction placed on them, the following timetable applies.

Administrative Records

Board of Trustees, including unpublished minutes
TBD

Office of the President
20 years after the date when the President leaves office, or 70 years after date of creation

Records related to donors
75 years after date of creation

Provost, Registrar, Financial Affairs and Treasury, Admissions, etc.
70 years after date of creation

Records of academic departments and functional departments (facilities, dining services, etc)
40 years after date of creation

Personnel Records

Files on Brandeis University employees
75 years after date of creation
Or lifetime of employee plus 50 years, or 100 years total, whichever is earlier (though from the best practices research, the lifetime of a person can be considered 100 years)

Faculty Papers

40 years after the date of creation for departmental records and for all other records the access will be specified in the Deed of Gift

Student Records

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) governs access to student records. Closed records will be available to the general public 100 years after the date of creation (check this against Registrar and other University departments or consistency). Senior theses and graduate theses submitted to the archives by Brandeis University students are considered open records, but there may be some instances when a student has imposed restrictions on the access and/or use of his or her senior or graduate thesis. Home addresses of students or alumni is restricted information and will be available to the general public 100 years after the date of creation.

University Publications

University publications such as campus newspapers, brochures, periodicals, and newsletters are intended for public use, so these are considered open records. A university publication is available to all researchers at any time as long as it is in a physical condition suitable for use.

Access Procedures

By operational necessity, the staff of the Brandeis University Archives & Special Collections department have access to all archival materials. Donors or the originating staff also have full access to the records that they donated or transferred to the Archives. Any request to access archival materials related to the history of Brandeis University must go through the University Archivist.

A researcher who would like to request an exception to the policies and obtain access to restricted or closed records may appeal to the University Archivist in writing. The researcher needs to clearly state the records of interest and his or her reason for wanting to access the restricted or closed records, including the intended use of the records and why they would be important to his or her research. The University Archivist may then consult with University Officials, the donor of the records, and/or the originating office to request written permission for the researcher to access the records.

If a researcher requests any university records that are stored off-site in a regional depository, it may take one to three days for the records to be delivered to the Brandeis University Archives & Special Collections department. The staff will then contact the researcher to let him or her know if the records can be accessed.

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