SFU Archives:
A guide for researchers

How to search our holdings and request access
Are you new to the SFU Archives?

Come to us for SFU history and much more!

Our holdings tell the story of one of Canada’s top ranked universities, which grew from traditional roots and was transformed through the turbulent sixties. But the dynamic personalities associated with SFU, whose documents and photos we acquire, also hold a wealth of information and insight about many other issues of interest to us all.

Are you interested in:

Provincial history?

W.A.C. Bennett was BC’s longest-serving premier, and he founded SFU. His personal papers are housed in the archives and span his entire political career. We also preserve a collection of Columbia River Treaty Tapes containing a lecture series on the development of hydroelectric power in BC, one of Bennett’s most far-reaching and controversial megaprojects.

Women’s issues?

SFU feminists were in the vanguard of the women’s liberation movement in Vancouver and BC. We have collections from Maggie Benston and Andrea Lebowitz as well as the Vancouver Women’s Bookstore, Press Gang Printers, the SFU Childcare Society, the SFSS Women’s Centre, and the Society for Canadian Women in Science and Technology.

Social activism?

The lower mainland has a long tradition of community activists. Read about local women pulling together to help their neighbours as the East Enders Society, or about the John Howard Society’s work with the criminal justice system.

Once you become familiar with our finding aids, you’ll see that we have collections relating to sports, culture, sciences...even the art of beekeeping.
Archives are different from libraries

Some useful terms

People and organizations create and keep letters, diaries, financial accounts, reports, photographs, audio recordings, films, and an endless variety of other materials in various media and formats.

When a body of material comes to the SFU Archives, the archivist keeps it together under the name of the organization or person that created it. That is to say, by its provenance.

The archivist arranges the records according to the original order in which the creator kept them. Provenance and original order preserve the evidential value and context of the records. For example, if a letter dated 30 years ago is found with notes for a book published ten years later, a researcher might be able to deduce that the letter was used in the research for the book.

An archival fonds is made up of the records naturally created and kept by a person or an organization in the course of its day-to-day activities. A collection is just an artificial assembly of materials brought together on a subject. While useful, collections might not have the same evidential value as archives. Our holdings contain both fonds and collections.

Since archives are not arranged by subject but by provenance, start your archival research by considering which organizations or people might have created records that apply to your area of interest. You can get this information from secondary sources or ask the archivist. For example, if Maggie Benston was mentioned in a book about women’s rights at SFU, you could find more information among her papers, which we hold.

First stop: SFU AtoM

Visit the SFU AtoM (Access to Memory) web site (https://atom.archives.sfu.ca/) and examine our holdings. Follow the links to the finding aid for the particular fonds or collection that interests you.
What is a finding aid?

A finding aid describes each archival fonds or collection. An introductory section provides context for the records through a brief history of the organization or a short biographical sketch, and describes the records in general terms.

If the records still look useful to you, follow the links to the series descriptions and file lists to narrow down your search. Keep track of the numbers for files that interest you.

### Ellen Frank fonds

**1974 - 1984**

25 cm of textual records

**Biographical sketch**

Ellen Frank’s interest in the women’s movement began in 1972, while on a Kibbutz in Israel. At the time she was married, expecting her second child, and reading Bette Freidan’s The Feminine Mystique. In April, upon return to Vancouver, Ellen Frank contacted the ‘Woman’s Centre’ and became involved in a consciousness-raising group. Ms. Frank’s involvement with the women’s movement expanded from these beginnings. She became, in her words, “unmarried,” and went to work at the Woman’s Place. In addition, Ms. Frank also became involved in organizing around day care issues, came out as a lesbian, and worked around issues of violence against women. She also spent time organizing demonstrations, being active in occupations, and involved in the fight for women’s rights in general.

**Scope and content**

Fonds consists of records created, received and collected by Ellen Frank in her involvement in the women’s movement in Vancouver. Activities documented include participation in the Association of University and College Employees (AUCE), the British Columbia Federation of Women (BCFW), the Solidarity Coalition, and activities relating to a number of other feminist organizations, issues, and actions. Includes correspondence, memoranda, minutes, agenda, reports, briefs, newsletters, press releases, notebooks, press clippings, project proposals, posters, and pamphlets.

The fonds is arranged into the following series:

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<th>Series #</th>
<th>Series title</th>
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<td>F-82-1</td>
<td>Association of University Employees</td>
<td>Files</td>
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<tr>
<td>F-82-2</td>
<td>British Columbia Federation of Women</td>
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<td>F-82-4</td>
<td>Feminist organizations, actions and issues</td>
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**Visit us at 0400 Maggie Benston Centre, or at www.sfu.ca/archives**

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