

The Productive Professional

By Terry Prince ©

Don't Throw That Away!

I recently helped a client sort out material in his garage. Among the items we came across was a collection of football programs with color covers (late 1940's) from a Catholic high school in the Anaheim area. These programs had limited personal appeal to the owner, but since my recent tour through the Sacramento Room of the Public Library, I have been enlightened. These are items of historical ephemera (Definition: Ephemera - lasting or existing briefly, of interest or value for only a short time). We had in fact found true treasures.

Finding a Home for Historical Treasures

I encourage all organizers to visit their area library Special History Collection. Cities in the Northern California region that have such collections are Marin, Oakland, Redwood City, San Francisco, Carmel, Humbolt and Sacramento. Call the main library for the department name, contact and phone number. Request a personal tour from the Special Collection Librarian or Archivist. Explain your profession and your guide can focus their presentation toward your special needs. Special collections are the perfect home for ephemera found in clients homes.

Ephemera

Items of ephemera, according to California State Archivist Joseph Samora, should be kept as local as possible. In the example of the 1940's football programs, likely candidates are; first - the actual school, next in priority - (since it is a member of a religious organization) the local diocese or a local Catholic university. Other potential resting spots might be the local or regional library or the town's historical society. Joseph Samora suggests that items that don't relate to an individual personally are precisely the items which can easily be donated. Archivists recommend you have your clients call first with a brief explanation of the materials. This will help the archivist determine if the items are of interest to their collection.



Artifacts and Other Materials

Items which may have significant local historical value and appeal to library collections are photographs, journals, diaries, field books, church directories and unique correspondence collections. Architectural blueprints and design drawings for regional buildings are often of significant value. Newsletters from local social and civic organizations, social group annual directories, ribbons and awards from local events and audio tapes which are interviews, may also be of considerable interest.

Larger artifacts such as business signs, props from local theatrical productions or costumes and uniforms worn regionally (cheerleader outfit/marching band costume) may be of value depending on the size and space restrictions of the facility. Regional history museums may be a good home for larger size artifacts.

Helping your Client and Maintaining History

Since clients tend to be procrastinators, providing an actual address, phone number and even a padded envelope might be a great service to them. Your assistance may help save and develop historic collections for generations to come. I urge all organizers to familiarize themselves with ephemera and items of historical value. Start with a trip to your local library special collection.

Terry Prince has been an organizing consultant since 1983. She can be reached at PrinceTer@aol.com. She is a contributor to the book Organizing Options: Solutions From Professional Organizers.

EPHEMERA ITEMS

- Animal Show Program
- Anniversary Celebrations Programs
- Annual Membership Cards From Local Area Organizations
- Art Show Program
- Award Programs
- Business grand opening programs
- Charitable Cause Programs
- Civic Group Programs
- Christmas Cards (Local Or Special Angle)
- Church programs or bulletins
- Clippings - Newspaper - Local Angle/Issue/Focus
- Dance Souvenir Programs
- Dedications Of Buildings, Parks
- Dramatic Event Program
- Flyers And Bulletins for Regional Events
- Garden Club Programs
- Graduation Programs
- Installation Of Officer Programs (Local Groups)
- Invitations To Civic Events, Fund Raisers
- Match Book Covers - Local Establishments
- Menus - Local Restaurants
- Musical Event Programs
- Pageant Material - Local Pamphlets
- Playbills
- Political Flyers, Campaign Material, Buttons
- Posters Announcing Cultural Events
- Receipts From Area Stores, Hotels.
- Sheet Music
- Special event programs
- Tickets From Regional Events
- Travel Brochures