

Sorting guidelines

ALVMB 2020. g.

Dates to keep in mind

- 1800s -1920 ALL DOCUMENTS, POLITICAL AND CULTURAL PAMPHLETS, PROGRAMS, CORRESPONDENCE, BOOKS AND NEWSPAPERS PRINTED IN THE U.S. IN THE LATVIAN LANGUAGE ARE RARE AND IMPORTANT. Especially those concerning early, pre 1940 emigration from Latvia (1905 exodus or earlier) and documenting life in United States.
- 1920-1940 Latvia's first independence years – ANYTHING FROM THIS PERIOD PRINTED IN THE U.S. IN LATVIAN IS VERY IMPORTANT. Please keep. If it was printed in Latvia pre 1945, it may be of interest to some research libraries.
- 1945 – Latvians who had escaped Latvia settled in DP (Displaced Person) camps in Germany, some landed in Sweden and other countries. Very active cultural life with lots of publications on very poor paper. School books and literature/fiction books are found in larger numbers and can be recycled. Some cultural and political publication, theater programs, etc. were printed in small runs and are still needed at the National Library. When in doubt, save.
- 1945 - In Latvia they came under Soviet rule and heavy censorship followed. Latvian libraries and archives do not need anything from this period from Latvia. Recycle.
- 1950's-1990 – most exiles emigrated from Germany to the U.S., Canada, Australia, and other countries. Active period of publishing. Some items still needed by National Library.
1991 – Latvia regained its independence and has been actively collecting materials since then. Publication in exile or diaspora dropped off greatly, as people now published their books in Latvia.

Personal documents. Who was this person?

1. If you have no idea what role your relative or friend played in the Latvian community – ask around (WHO). Some of their documents may tell you what organisations they were actively engaged in. If they were important to the Latvian exile community history, more attention will need to be payed to their papers.
2. Were they famous for achievements in science, music, and sports or other professions? If so, their papers should be examined in regard to this.
3. If they didn't seem to play any major role, then you should keep what you want for the family, and maybe leave a small archive that reflects who they were. We should keep some record that they were part of the community – like a shoe box or large manila envelope that documents them. Latvian archives welcome some documents and photographs collecting information on diaspora families.

Books

1. English and other non-Latvian language books that are not about Latvia or the Baltics. Take these to your local Friends of the Library or Goodwill. One exception may be if your relative or friend had new books (published in the last 10 years). Some of the non-fiction ones may be of interest, but medical and scientific texts and periodicals older than 5-10 years are of little use.
2. Latvian books
 - a) New Latvian books –printed since 1991 – may be of interest to your local Latvian center library
 - b) 1950-1990 books from Latvia, printed in Latvia – sort out separately. Of no interest in Latvia. Poetry, art and a few other may be of interest to local Latvian center library. Most of the Soviet era coffee table books with images of Latvia can be tossed.
 - c) 1945-1990 Latvian books printed in the U.S., Canada, Sweden, Denmark, Australia – sort out separately. There are some that are valuable, most are not.

Periodicals: magazines, journals, newspapers, newsletters in Latvian

1. Sort and bundle things with volumes, issues, dates separately. If you have time, it is helpful if you can pull together all the issues of one periodical.
2. English language periodicals that are not Baltic connected you can recycle, even that glorious collection of National Geographic issues.
3. Major Latvian exile newspapers like *Laiks*, *Latvija Amerika*, *Brīva Latvija* are digitized can be recycled.
4. Most major Latvian exile magazines like *Jaunā Gaita* have been digitized, and can be recycled.
5. The most valuable periodicals are the small local community or church newsletters. Latvia does not have full runs of many of these.

Brochures and programs

1. If you find brochures about Latvian events, organizations, sort those out.
2. Some people have kept scrapbooks of events they have attended. Keep the whole scrapbook if it is of Latvian community events, as often dates are not printed, and it helps if someone has kept them in a chronological order.
3. Booklets of the major song festivals can be recycled.
4. Catalogs of art and craft exhibits at song festivals should be kept, as these are sometimes the only documentation of some artists' work.
5. Do not keep church programs (unless in a scrapbook or very well organized), as they should be in the congregation archive.
6. Keep programs of funeral ceremonies and obituaries.

Personal papers (For letters, see below)

1. Keep major life event documents – birth, marriage & death certificates, naturalization papers, passports, ID's – especially any from Latvia and DP camp life. If documents with legal status are

not to be donated to or kept by the family they should be shredded, never discarded in trash where they could be used to steal identity.

2. Professional and organization_documents – keep enough to reflect who they were and what they accomplished.
3. Keep any memoirs written by person.

Organizational papers

1. Keep minutes and any organizational documents.

Letters

1. Before email, people wrote letters – sometimes lots of letters.
 - a) Ordinary family correspondence, greeting cards, and notes can be discarded. Of interest may be letters regarding the immigration experience, correspondence with sponsors, etc. It is helpful if some family member can undertake reading family letters to see what may be of value before they are discarded. If you have lots of time, you may want to return letters to the original writer or the writer's family – it may contain their family history, but locating and contacting people is a lot of work.
 - b) Correspondence from relatives in Latvia (again unless well known) can probably be recycled.
 - c) Here again it depends who the person was – ask around, people will know if your relative or friend was someone important in the Latvian community – a writer, artist, musician, active in the local organizations, important in political, and cultural circles (ambassadors, political activists), their correspondence should be retained. They may also have corresponded with other Latvians who are significant to our history.
 - d) If the significant person has organized correspondence in file folders or binders –keep them as is in the folders. Loose letters are more complicated to sort.
 - e) Organizational letters may be important and should be kept.

Legal matters – CHECK WITH LAWYERS

1. Hopefully any major legal documents are in the hands of lawyers.
2. Keep wills and deeds in family.
3. Financial documents need to be kept for 7 years.
4. Before recycling documents (whether current or outdated) with legal proof of identity they should always be shredded to prevent identity theft.

Photos

1. Labeled and dated photos are the best. Label photos with pencil, not ballpoint pen. Never use Scotch tape on photos.
2. Family photos – keep for family. Maybe a few for archives to illustrate who person was. A few photos of the person in a folk costume or photos that show the interior of a Latvian home

decorated with Latvian art, craft objects and textiles, are useful to document immigrant life and cultural heritage preservation. These may be of interest to museums or archives.

3. Photos of Latvian community events would be good, but need to be identified. Photos of political activities, anti-Communist demonstrations, "Captive Nations Day" celebrations should be kept.

Sound and video recordings

1. Differentiate between published sound and video recordings and those recorded by an individual (amateur) at an event. The latter, if documenting community and organizational events, may be important
2. Commercial products
 - a) Vinyl records – Those produced in the U.S. may be useful to archives
 - b) Cassette tapes – pitch? yes
 - c) VHS – pitch? yes
 - d) CD's – keep? Donate to Latvian community library, school?
 - a) DVD's – keep? Donate to Latvian community library, school?
3. Amateur recordings of any type
 - a) Family events – Rarely of significance unless the person was publicly important.
 - b) Organizational events – these may be important. Keep

Computer data

1. Again, unless the person was the longtime head of the local organization, and may have valuable information on their computer or on disks, flash drives, etc. it can probably all be tossed.
2. Old floppy disks – information can be retrieved from these, but with much difficulty and expense, so unless it is a significant manuscript that is nowhere else, probably should just be discarded.
3. If the person was actively using a computer, pass that on to another organizational person to see if there is anything that needs to be archived.

Art

1. Latvian paintings can be of value to a museum collection or other Latvians may be interested in purchasing them. You can also donate them to a Latvian church, or organization, which may resell them as a fundraising project.
2. Take a photo, and describe the painting, if possible. List Artist, medium (oil, watercolor, drawing etc.) and size.
3. Sketches, even by amateurs, of wartime or immigrant life are important.

Other Latvian objects

1. Objects that have a story – how and why they were brought from Latvia and survived through the war, DP camps, came to the U.S. and were significant to someone – may be candidates for

one of the museums. Objects made in DP camps are very important. Some objects can document a significant Latvian-American experience in the U.S. (T-shirt with Latvian summer camp logo, Latvian Scout insignia, Latvian Song Festival souvenirs, etc.)

2. Many Latvian objects will not be of museum quality, often the work of unskilled amateur artists or craftsmen. Those that are exceptional works of art or craft should go to a museum. The rest are worth giving to the local Latvian rummage sale. Goodwill will not know what to do with them but should be the second choice.
 - a. Folk Costumes- Traditional costumes are usually professionally made and expensive and should not be discarded. Costumes or costume parts made in Latvia before 1940 or in DP camps 1945-1950 will be of value to Latvian museums in the U.S. and possibly in Latvia. Costumes made in the United States after 1950 are of value, but not every example will find a home in a Latvian museum. Those in good condition may be sold or donated to younger Latvian Americans participating in folk dance and choral groups. You might offer a full costume to the local history or art museum in your American community to document the history of Latvians there. A short biography and photos of the original owner or wearer of the costume should accompany the donation.
 - b. Ceramics – vases, bowls, candleholders, cups, etc. Wood carvings or inlays – plates, candle holders, etc. Rummage sale donations, unless exceptional quality or history.
 - c. Linen tablecloths, runners, napkins, etc. Rummage sale donations, unless exceptional quality or history.
 - d. Decorative pillows, blankets, wall hangings, bookmarks, etc. Rummage sale donations, unless exceptional quality or history.
 - e. Jewelry – most is made of silver or gold and is expensive if bought today. There should be resale opportunities – E-bay or elsewhere. Amber is quite beautiful, but available quite easily in the Latvian community but antique amber is getting expensive in the retail market.
 - f. Medals and Insignia – Organizational (ALA, PBLA, Latvian pre 1950 military, political, 3x3, 2x2, Scout,) Keep for museums. Military medals and insignia have resale value
 - g. Knick knacks and souvenirs: Those made in Latvia - - discard. Those that are souvenirs of U.S. based Latvian events (Song Festivals, Scout jamborees) may be of value to museums.