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Center for Craft to Acquire the American Craft Council Library & Archives Collections

*Two major craft organizations make a landmark transfer
to foster the preservation of craft history*



Photo courtesy of the American Craft Council

ASHEVILLE, N.C. – At its celebration for the 20th anniversary of the Craft Research Fund, the Center for Craft announced the acquisition of the American Craft Council (ACC) Library and Archives Collections—a landmark gift that will expand opportunities and access while protecting and developing wide-ranging craft histories.

With a planned 2028 opening at the Center's downtown Asheville building, the collections will join the Center's existing Materials Collection and Craft Research Fund Collection to form the Center

for Craft Community Library and Archives, which will be publicly accessible to ensure that broad and diverse craft legacies are documented, preserved, and celebrated for future generations. As a national nonprofit and leading advocate for craft research, the Center for Craft has changed the landscape of the field—funding pivotal scholarship, fostering emerging artists and researchers, and promoting underrepresented narratives to ensure a more inclusive and comprehensive history of craft.

The gift of the ACC Library and Archives Collections brings a resource of national significance to Asheville, establishing it as a hub for craft knowledge and scholarship among one of the country's richest concentrations of craft artists, craft education organizations, and regional craft archive holdings. Though smaller archives exist around the world, among U.S.-based collections, the ACC Library and Archives Collections is second only in breadth and scope to the Smithsonian's Archives of American Art Craft Collections.

"Since its founding in 1996, the Center for Craft has become an important advocate for craft and, in particular, for research and scholarly writing on craft," says ACC Executive Director Andrea Specht. "We are pleased to have found such a well-positioned partner to build on ACC's venerable legacy in craft scholarship and maximize the value of our collections through complementary programs and activities. Partnering with the Center for Craft to steward the ACC Library & Archives leverages resources across the craft field, and in doing so, fosters cooperation, reduces duplication, and allows ACC to focus on expanding our digital storytelling, adding to our lineup of in-person and virtual events, and increasing direct artist support through our Early Career Artist Program and other initiatives."

The ACC Library and Archives Collections is recognized as one of the most robust resources for researching and discovering the history of contemporary American craft and its makers. The collection comprises more than 25,000 digital assets, numerous physical records, and a print collection of approximately 20,000 books, catalogs, and other items focused on American craft, primarily from the post-World War II era to the present. Additional special collections comprise artist files, institutional files, and poster collections, including nearly 4,500 files on craft artists from around the country, spanning from the early 1960s to the present.

The Center for Craft's goal is for these resources to act as a living source of history for the community. Less than 15 years ago, there was a small and sparing body of craft literature for scholars to research. Artist papers and primary sources were scarce and often unidentified.

"Over the past decade, a field of craft studies has emerged, and now there are more craft scholars and curators than ever before. The existence of this newer field of craft research remains tenuous, however," says Center for Craft Director of Programs and Curator Marilyn Zapf. "Continued access to and expansion of one of the most comprehensive collections of studio craft archives is critical to ensure that progress in craft studies will continue into the future."

In its new home, the ACC Library and Archives Collections will deepen the Center's existing role as a catalyst for research and ideas about craft. Its longest-running grant program, the Craft

Research Fund, has awarded nearly \$2 million to 255 projects nationwide since 2005, and its Craft Archive Fellowship has advanced scholarship into underrecognized and nondominant craft histories in the United States since 2022.

“From our beginnings 30 years ago, the Center for Craft has always connected scholarship about craft to its making and exhibition,” says Center for Craft Executive Director Stephanie Moore. “We have long recognized that what gets documented and studied shapes our understanding of culture and inspires the next generation of makers. With the acquisition of this incredible library and archive, we are creating a destination for study and visitation that will directly connect to the artists and scholars we support and exhibit.”

To help steward the transition of resources, the Center for Craft will hire a staff librarian in 2026 to usher in the next chapter for the collections while the preparation of physical space commences at the Center’s historic building in downtown Asheville. The Center for Craft Community Library and Archives is planned to fully reopen in 2028 and will be free and accessible to the public, both in person and online through a dedicated database. Key materials from the collections will be available by request on a limited basis by the end of 2026.

Among the artists, groups, and craft mediums represented in the ACC Library and Archives Collections are:

Notable Organizational Collections

- World Crafts Council (1964–present)
- Craft Students League of New York (1920s–2005)
- Art Jewelry Forum
- Society of North American Goldsmiths Slide Collection—nearly 15,000 slide images of works by metalsmiths of national and international significance
- Furniture Society—16 oral history interviews conducted in 2016
- Friends of Fiber Art International artist files

Notable Individual Collections

- Michael McTwigan (editor, *American Ceramics* magazine)
- Naomi Whiting-Towner (artist, educator, author)
- Jo Lauria (curator, writer, educator)
- M. Anna Fariello (curator, scholar, Smithsonian Renwick Fellow in American Craft)

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About the Center for Craft

Center for Craft amplifies how and why craft matters by increasing access to resources that catalyze makers and thinkers nationwide. Proudly based in Asheville, it has been at the center of the conversation about craft since 1996.

Each year, the Center provides nearly \$500,000 in grants and fellowships to makers, scholars, and curators while also producing exhibitions and public programs that shed light on the role of craft in the 21st century. It invests in the people and ideas behind the objects that shape our lives. Learn more at centerforcraft.org.

About the American Craft Council

The American Craft Council (ACC) is a national nonprofit fostering connection through the handmade. Building upon an 80+ year legacy of tradition and innovation as a membership-based nonprofit, ACC leverages the transformative possibilities of craft through storytelling, resources for artists and appreciators, and events. In partnership with organizations across the country, we mobilize our diverse craft ecosystem to create a world where objects matter, makers thrive, and craft connects.