Thank you for your question. Strictly speaking, the archives of anyone, no matter what their function, are, *documents received and set aside for further use or consultation*. In this sense, we rely on you, the creator, to decide what documents are worth preserving over the long term. By documents, we mean either text (research notes, drafts, and correspondence) but also non-text (photographs, audio-visual material, artwork).

We are also interested in seeing the documents in their original order – that is, the order that the creator kept them in. According to archival theory, the original order preserves the relationships between the records, making the archive greater than the sum of its parts.

Having said that, when authors and others donate their archives to an institution, many seem to pick and choose what they donate. I know someone who illustrates children’s books who donates her archives to us. She donates her artwork, drafts, royalty records, and correspondence regarding the books. But no personal correspondence. Clearly this doesn’t represent every document that she creates or receives, but in any case, in the public eye, these documents constitute her whole archive.

Other donors with whom we work have volumes and volumes of documents, often in a very disorganized state. They may ask us for help before transferring the records to us. We handle these situations case by case and we can usually identify the proper aggregations of documents to transfer. But it really is up to the donor how much of their personal life or secondary life functions are reflected in the documents they make public.

Thinking specifically of authors, I would personally encourage the donation of any records that would reflect the process of writing and research and any other documents that would help researchers better understand the author overall.

If your question is more related to your own records management and less towards donating to an archival institution in the future, I wouldn’t presume to tell you what is important enough for you to keep and what you should throw away.

This may not seem like useful advice, but I think you should do whatever feels natural. If a document or a document file feels like it would be either useful to you later on or important for posterity’s sake then I’d consider keeping it.

We have several authors’ archives in Rare Books and Special Collections and the University Archives holds the archives of several authors like yourself. I would encourage you to check out the finding aids for some of these if you are interested in searching for the fonds at Rare Books.

I hope this information helps you and all the best with your new book.