SCUA welcomes donations of materials that fall within its collecting scope and other support for its activities. Of particular interest are personal or professional papers, books, photographs and artwork relating to:

- Social change and movements for social change
- Labor, work, and industry
- African American history and culture
- Agriculture, horticulture, and the natural sciences
- Environmentalism, conservationism, and sustainable living
- The social, political, cultural, and intellectual history of western New England

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As you live, believe in life! Always human beings will live and progress to greater, broader and fuller life.

--W.E.B. Du Bois, Last Message to the World, 1957

As early as 1868, the Massachusetts Agricultural College began to acquire rare and important works in the history of agriculture. H.K. Oliver's gift of a handful of significant books in apiculture and gardening formed the kernel from which an important research collection has grown, expanding over the years to include works in African American history and culture; agriculture and the natural sciences; labor, work, and industry; social change; and the history of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and western New England.

The acquisition of the papers of W.E.B. Du Bois signaled a new era for the library's Department of Special Collections and University Archives (SCUA). With the arrival of that collection in 1973, SCUA emerged as a national center for historical research, and the papers not only brought new opportunities for scholars, but a new focus for collecting. SCUA's holdings have subsequently grown to include over 22,000 printed volumes, 14,000 linear feet of manuscripts and archival records, and hundreds of historic maps and atlases. Today, the department attracts a diverse audience of students, scholars, and other members of the general public, working on projects that range from undergraduate term papers to newspaper articles and academic monographs.

Du Bois's legacy as an intellectual and activist has exerted a strong influence over the shape of SCUA's collections. Following in his spirit, the department focuses on documenting the history of social change, collecting the records of individuals and organizations devoted to the positive transformation of American society through political, cultural, spiritual, or economic means. Rather than document any single movement or individual approach, SCUA examines the conceptual and organizational connections between them, emphasizing, for example, how the struggle for peace and racial equality are linked, or how innovative approaches in agriculture relate to labor, the environment, or social justice. Our goal is to document the whole lives and careers of persons involved in promoting social change, and to reveal both the context in which their interests have developed and how those interests have evolved through time and experience.

Under the general heading of social change, SCUA focuses most intently upon a relatively small number of tightly interrelated areas, including the movements for peace, social justice, racial equality, and gay rights, labor activism, the antinuclear movement, environmentalism, sustainable living, organic farming, and intentional communities. The Du Bois Papers have been joined by the papers of activists such as Horace Mann Bond, Carl Oglesby, Randy Kehler, Bob Winston, and Mary Wentworth, and organizations as varied as the Liberation News Service, the Brotherhood of the Spirit commune, the Renewable Energy Research Laboratories, and the Massachusetts State AFL-CIO. The University Archives, which documents the intellectual and social life of the UMass Amherst community, contains a number of collections that also resonate with the theme of social change.

SCUA is charged more generally with preserving the social, political, intellectual, and cultural history of our region, and especially western New England. Dating from the 18th century to the present, these collections include highlights such as the papers of Congressman Silvio O. Conte, natural scientists Benjamin Smith Lyman and William Smith Clark (travelers in Meiji-era Japan), and Boston Globe editor Charles Whipple. The literary and performing arts communities are particularly well represented by William Lederer, Leonard Lewin, Harvey Swados, Robert Francis, Anne Halley, the Massachusetts Review, the Valley Light Opera, and Double Edge Theatre. More eclectic collections include the Kress (Anglo-American political economy), Binet and Brabançonne (Revolutionary-era France and Belgium), and Harold Gordon Collections (interwar Germany), works by and about William Morris, William Butler Yeats, Archibald MacLeish, the poetry library of Wallace Stevens, and collections of imprints ranging from silver age science fiction to Socialism.

Key to its mission, SCUA also plays an active role in the intellectual life of the university, collaborating with faculty in instruction, sponsoring colloquia, and assisting scholars and students in their research.