

11 October 2013

Gregg Steinhafel
Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer
Target Corporation
Minneapolis, MN



Dear Mr. Steinhafel,

Greetings. We are writing to you today as concerned Target customers, as archivists and as members of the Issues & Advocacy Roundtable, a section of the Society of American Archivists (SAA). The Society of American Archivists is North America's oldest and largest national archival professional association, and part of its mission is to promote the values and diversity of archives and archivists. Our Roundtable tracks issues of importance to archivists and the archival community. This letter concerns the recent decision by Target to discontinue its corporate archives.

We were surprised and saddened to hear of this turn of events. Obviously we are most concerned for the future of our professional colleagues who are now unemployed. Although we realize that companies from time to time make organizational changes which can lead to staff reductions, Target's Archives and its staff have been a model for corporate archives and archivists. In fact, several of those employees have served in leadership positions with the SAA. Their leadership demonstrated Target's commitment to the historical record, professional development, and innovation. We are truly surprised because we believed that Target recognized the critical importance of corporate archives and archivists to the company's historical legacy and the enduring continuity of its operations.

Prominent and farsighted corporations understand that their archives document the historical development and progress of their organization and products. They further understand that archives provide critical support for marketing campaigns, trademark protection, and provide media with historical documentation and images which demonstrates the corporation's impact on American society. Target has a long and storied history since its original founding in 1902 as Dayton Dry Goods. In the subsequent 111 years your company has become a visible and influential component of American economic life. Without Target's corporate archives and the hardworking professionals who staff it and make it accessible, documenting and preserving Target's historical and ongoing evolution will become extremely difficult, if not impossible.

We also fear that the closing of the Target Archives will negatively affect Target's business operations. Corporate archives are key sources for ensuring the integrity of corporate fiscal, intellectual and proprietary interests. The discontinuation of the archives does not mean that its functions cease, rather in most cases the duties and tasks are distributed to staff that neither have the skills or training to meet the unique needs of archival records. The result is often that crucial documents are mislaid, lost, or accidentally destroyed, leaving Target vulnerable both legally and financially. Professional archivists ensure that the company maintains the appropriate chain of documentation and records retention.

We urge you to reconsider your decision to discontinue the Target Archives and eliminate its archival staff. The closure, while it may seem financially expedient at this time, will, in the long run be seen as a disservice to Target, its brand, its employees, its legions of customers, and to potential researchers who see the value in studying the history of Target. We thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Jeremy Brett and Sarah Quigley
Chair and Vice-Chair, Issues & Advocacy Roundtable
Society of American Archivists

Steering Committee Members:

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