Harvard University Special Collections and Archives Joint Processing Guidelines

Background and Executive Summary

The Joint Processing Guidelines Working Group (JPGWG) was charged with "developing a suite of best practices and guidelines for archival and manuscript collections that will serve as a Harvard-wide framework in which local practices can be embedded."

We first conducted a survey of current processing practices at 18 Harvard repositories. Data showed that most repositories have two or fewer staff dedicated to archival processing, and that all repositories but one have a backlog of undescribed or under-described material.

The JPGWG then produced a set of principles, frameworks, practices, and toolkits (hereafter referred to collectively as Guidelines) in which to guide future archival processing across Harvard Library. With a consistent and efficient approach across repositories, we hope to address inconsistencies in data for easier future migrations, create a user-friendly environment for users across repositories, provide a foundation for collecting statistics to make future fundraising and collaborative projects easier to scope and plan, and allow Harvard Library a deeper knowledge of the breadth and depth of its special collections materials.

The Guidelines also touch on the importance of all repositories recognizing the importance of responsibly identifying and managing Harvard University records, acquired both through direct transfer from University offices and mixed in with faculty papers donations.[1] In addition to these Processing Guidelines, archivists should also familiarize themselves with the General Records Schedule (GRS) to fully understand the scope and user access restriction periods applied to Harvard University records where they appear in both manuscript collections and record groups.

Widespread adoption of the underlying philosophy and use of the suite of practices and tools that make up the Guidelines relies on a combination of local implementation, structured guidance, training, and feedback provided by the JPGWG, and support from SPARC and Harvard Library leadership.

Our work is heavily influenced by the "Guidelines for Efficient Archival Processing in the University of California Libraries"; Dan Santamaria's *Extensible Processing for Archives and Special Collections*; Chris Weideman's "Accessioning as Processing" and the beta

[1] University records are defined by a 1995 Harvard Corporation vote as "all forms of recorded information regardless of physical characteristics, created, received, recorded, or legally filed in the course of University business or in pursuance of the University's legal obligations."

version of the revised Principles to Archival Description for *Describing Archives: A Content Standard*. We used methods adapted from the Agile philosophy to guide our work including the development of personas and user stories to address our user's needs.

We believe archival work must focus as much as possible on providing users with access to, clear description of, and transparency about our interventions in archival collections. Promoting the scholarly and general use of archival materials is the defining reason why we are dedicated archival professionals. We believe adoption of these guidelines across Harvard will result in increased use of our collections and a richer experience for our research community.

PRINCIPLES

Archival records vary in scope, content, research value, and complexity as do repository resources and priorities. Within the Harvard Library system alone the range of resources is wide, from those with one staff member who rely mainly on students to those with as many as nine staff dedicated to archival processing. Common to all, however, is an abundance of special collections material in need of archival intervention and stewardship in order to be discovered and used by our research community. True also is that for most repositories, additional staff dedicated to processing is unlikely. As a result, shared approaches and practices for efficient archival processing are essential if we are to make Harvard's unique and extensive archival holdings transparently accessible and open to research.

We know the following to be true:

- Archival description enables discovery, use, and good stewardship.

- For a sustainable model of discovery and use, efficient archival processing is necessary. Good enough processing is better than no processing.

- To best meet the demands of our users and adequately care for all of our holdings, we must always make informed decisions about levels of arrangement, description, and preservation.

How can the Harvard community respond to these challenges?

The Joint Processing Guidelines Working Group established a set of recommendations that can serve as guidelines for efficient archival processing across special collections within Harvard Library. These guidelines provide detailed guidance on practices that support efficient archival processing. These practices rest on a set of shared principles:

Principle 1
Strive to make all collections, even those that are unprocessed, open for research.
- Exceptions may be made for collections with institutional, legal, and donor-stipulated restrictions.

Principle 2
Strive to provide a publicly discoverable collection-level description for each collection within a repository.
- Repositories should prioritize gaining collection-level control over all holdings. Detailed description should wait until after all collections are discoverable at a baseline level.

Principle 3
Aim to provide the "golden minimum" in processing and description.

- Analyze and assess each collection in order to perform the appropriate amount of work necessary to make each collection useable.
- Further description should be justified by research value or other repository priorities.

Principle 4
Make assessment-based, data-driven decisions regarding processing priorities, policies, workflows, and staff and resource allocations. Assessment measures should reflect and support local needs and practices.

Principle 5
Clear and consistent communication across functions (technical services, public services, curatorial) is necessary to support efficient archival processing.

Principle 6
Documentation of our policies and practices provides continuity and promotes transparency, both of which strengthen our relationships with our users and other stakeholders.

EFFICIENT PROCESSING

The Joint Processing Guidelines Working Group conducted a survey of Harvard repositories in January 2017. The survey revealed that most repositories have a backlog of undescribed archival collections, and many have finding aids or lists of material that are only available onsite at the repository. Our goal as stewards of unique archival material should be to make as much of this material open and visible to the user and research community as possible. In order to reach this goal, archival professionals need to embrace a model of practice that opens more collections to research with adequate description and processing.

Using an efficient processing approach can move our collections from accessioning to the reading room with more speed. Efficient processing describes a practice in which each archival collection is analyzed and assessed in order to perform the appropriate amount of work necessary to make that collection useable and forms part of a programmatic approach to processing. Good accessioning practices and careful use assessment can allow repositories to then focus more detailed descriptive work on institutional priorities.

Traditionally archival processing has been seen and understood as one of several separate archival functions. What is increasingly clear to those who manage processing both at repositories across Harvard and throughout the profession is how processing practices cannot be improved, streamlined, or made more efficient without a shift in our understanding of what we mean when we say “processing.”

Processing, the analysis and description of archival material in order to make it discoverable and comprehensible to users, cannot continue to consist of siloed practitioners tackling single collections in a vacuum. Collections must be considered holistically across an entire repository, work priorities must be strategically determined, and decisions must be made about what to process as well as how to process different collections.

Developing a sustainable descriptive program at an archival repository includes rethinking traditional archival activities and taking a more integrated approach; doing more work at accessioning; repurposing donor-provided description where possible; communicating frequently with curators, research services staff, and other archivists in order to build expertise that will aid in prioritizing work; and appraisal skills that will allow *all* collections to be accessible to research use as quickly as possible. We believe this work is scalable both up and down - that small repositories can also manage to work this way as well as large repositories.

We aim to provide guidance on developing a thoughtful and efficient program of practice: expanding our ideas of “archival processing,” setting priorities, planning descriptive work, utilizing clearly defined levels of processing, and using efficient practices. The effective management of archival processing requires a deep familiarity with and flexible use of these practices. However, a repository cannot effectively

perform efficient processing without also reviewing accessioning policies, determining which collections may receive the most use from a repository's user base, gathering data from multiple sources to make decisions and back up our professional knowledge that one size does not, in fact, fit all.

Shifting expectations

The University of Maryland's archival processing manual suggests, "**A collection is processed when an individual can make productive use of it for research**."

This does NOT imply that a collection is processed when items within a folder are arranged chronologically. Or when folder titles within a box all begin at the same point on the folder. We are better serving our users when we focus on clear and helpful description of materials than when we worry about whether the folders in the box are arranged chronologically.

This is not to suggest that we lose physical control over our material, that we not list folder titles, that we not number folders (although many repositories may not do so), but merely that we begin by taking a more holistic approach to the management and practices of archival processing and realize that not all archival collections require the same amount of work in order to be used productively for research.

Expanding our idea of what "processed" looks like and means is the first step in developing efficient processing practices.

In practice, this can mean:

> Accepting that work done at the point of accessioning can/must often be good enough to get a collection into a user's hands.
>
> Prioritizing baseline description for all collections, and prioritizing staff descriptive expertise for high-use collections or for robust scope notes. Using paraprofessional and student work time to create file lists if they are appropriate for a collection.
>
> Utilizing professional assessment and appraisal skills to make informed decisions about which collections need which types of interventions.

By using a framework of articulated processing levels in conjunction with our professional archival appraisal skills, we can expand our ideas of what "processed" means, and gain expertise at determining the best level of description for each archival collection in our repositories. By being mindful of ways we can use "accessioning as processing," we can better manage the lifecycle of our materials and get them into the hands of users -- the main goal of our work -- much quicker.

ACCESSIONING

Establishing Preliminary Control and Baseline Level Processing

What is accessioning?

In the archival sense, accessioning is the act of taking physical and legal custody of a group of records or other material and documenting that receipt. Legal custody is documented through a deed of gift or an acquisitions agreement (or any other nomenclature used for these documents).

The materials may be acquired by gift, bequest, purchase, transfer, retention schedule, or statute. An accession may be part of a larger, existing collection. An accession added to an existing collection is sometimes called an accretion or an accrual.

Why is accessioning important?

Accessioning forms part of the legal and ethical obligations of a repository when they take in material. By documenting receipt of legal agreements and accounting for contents, accessioning helps to authenticate the provenance of the records by accounting for chain of custody as well as address any transfer of physical or intellectual property.

Accessioning represents an opportunity for the repository to gain basic physical and intellectual control of material, and in this way, accessioning forms the basis of any good collections management apparatus.

What do we mean by legal custody and intellectual and physical control?

Legal Custody

It is important to establish and document the ownership of any archival material that comes to a repository, whether through purchase, gift, deposit, or transfer. This includes physical rights, who owns the actual material, as well as intellectual property rights, who owns the content of the material. These types of concerns are generally outlined in a deed of gift or an acquisition agreement. This documentation helps to track the chain of custody, provide verification of authenticity, and formally document a repository's intent to acquire for academic purposes.

Intellectual Control

A repository should document every collection or addition to a collection that comes in the door by creating an accession record. This record can serve a number of functions at once:

- it ensures that legal and physical transfer of materials is complete;
- it forms the basis of a collection management system (a place where staff can see what they have, what they took in and when, where it's located, what size, condition, restrictions, etc.);
- it can function as the first iteration of a publically accessible description for the collection.

An accession record is the foundation for later archival description. Accession records are kept in a variety of systems at Harvard Library, including: Aleph, ArchivesSpace, Excel, Access, and even analog systems like cards and accession books. Independent of where and how the accession records are kept, it's critical that the record be standards-compliant and easily exchanged or interoperable with a system for discovery and access. DACS (Describing Archives: A Content Standard) provides a set of required data elements for a single-level description, of which an accession record is one.

- Reference Code Element (2.1)
- Name and Location of Repository Element (2.2)
- Title Element (2.3)
- Date Element (2.4)
- Extent Element (2.5)
- Name of Creator(s) Element (2.6) (if known)
- Scope and Content Element (3.1)
- Conditions Governing Access Element (4.1)
- Languages and Scripts of the Material Element (4.5)

Physical Control

It is important to understand when receiving material into a repository for the first time the extent and condition of that material. Did what arrived at the repository match what was expected? Is anything missing? Are there major preservation concerns? Physical control can be as granular as you need, whether just checking the accession as a whole or checking boxes, folders, and the contents within. Another part of gaining physical control of material is making sure it can be found later. This process might consist of simply labeling boxes and tracking a temporary shelving location or it might be fairly extensive where materials are rehoused into archival boxes and folders, labeled, barcoded, and shelved in a permanent location.

If archives staff perform some basic processing activities while accessioning, the material can be easily used in the reading room almost immediately. The material should be physically stable enough to remain intact for off-site transfer; the contents should fit snugly enough to avoid bouncing or sliding out of its enclosure while not being overstuffed.

Labels should clearly display the accession number (or another identifier like call number), box number, and title. Labels can be printed, or can be clearly written with marker on the outside of the box. Label templates can be useful to keep the language consistent when several staff members are working to bring in accessions.

By rehousing, labeling, and preparing the boxes for use at the point of accession, there is less confusion about the accession. It is easier to find for processing and public services staff and clearly defined for citation by users.

How to accession

There are two different approaches to accessioning: standard and optimal. With each approach, accessioning is considered the first opportunity for an archivist to gain basic physical and intellectual control over the materials.

- **Standard (required):** considered the bare minimum of what is necessary for good stewardship of material

- **Optimal:** accessioning as processing, some basic processing activities are undertaken at time of accessioning, collections meet minimum requirements for Level I processing, discoverable and open for research

Standard accessioning in practice

Description -- Internal or publically accessible accession record (at least DACS Single-level Required elements)

Physical and intellectual arrangement -- none, left as is

Physical control -- box labels applied, temporary storage location assigned and tracked

Preservation -- rebox if unservable as is

Appraisal -- none, for collections with privacy concerns throughout, restrict entire collection and review for use on demand

The following are examples of MARC records generated by repurposing standard accession record information: Irene Mikus photographs and ephemera, Eily Beadell papers, Vera Allen papers, Harvard Medical School Stork Club records.

Optimal accessioning in practice

Description -- Internal or publically accessible accession record, MARC record and/or an online finding aid (at least DACS Single-level Required elements), possibly with Series/Sub-series description or a brief box listing

Physical and intellectual arrangement -- put series and/or boxes into rough order

Physical control -- box labels and barcodes applied, permanent location assigned and tracked

Preservation -- rebox if unservable as is. House loose items. Replace folders, binders, or envelopes only if unserviceable.

Appraisal -- appraise series, sub-series or other large discernible chunks of material, avoid finer weeding. If privacy concerns exist throughout an entire series, restrict series and review for use on demand.

Examples: Jonathan Bayliss Papers, Lesser Samuels Papers, Jerry Schatzberg Papers

A note about control files

Most repositories keep some sort of physical (or digital) file for each collection. Control files typically contain gift or acquisition agreements, relevant correspondence with donors or dealers, preliminary file lists or other descriptions, collection summaries, authority work documentation, and preliminary research materials. No matter where or how these files are kept, it's important that they are kept and kept in a place that is accessible to all staff. Control files are a central unit for documentation regarding a collection and often the first place to start research when processing.

A note about born-digital materials

Archival principles apply equally to records of all formats, however, the nature of the carrier requires different workflows for digital material. It is imperative given the fragility of electronic media (the "carrier") to properly accession born-digital materials in a separate track from analog materials (this means accessioning the files on the carriers not just the carriers). Even when operating under full capacity to process born digital materials, there are some basic measures that every repository can take to better ensure the long term preservation and accessibility of its materials.

The Digital Forensics Working Group of Harvard Library is working on recommendations for archival treatment of born digital content. A link to their work is here:
https://wiki.harvard.edu/confluence/display/librarymeetings/Recommendations+and+Common+Practices

Additional considerations

How to handle accruals

An accrual, sometimes called an accretion, is additional material that forms part of an existing collection but arrives at a repository separately. Integrating accruals both physically and intellectually with related collection material is time-consuming. Because of this, a majority of accruals remain unprocessed and inaccessible. With a few small adjustments to accessioning workflows, accruals, just like any accessioned material, need not enter into a processing backlog.

A time saving measure can be to create a separate series in the existing finding aid for the accrual. The new series can be titled using the accession number. The series can remain unprocessed, accessible at the series level, or it can be minimally arranged and described assuring access beyond the series level. The collection level description can be updated to reflect any changes to extent, date, and scope and content.

The University of California Guidelines for Efficient Archival Processing provide useful guidelines that outline different levels of treatment an accrual could get.

Examples of finding aids where accruals were integrated efficiently, either by adding additional series or integrating the materials intellectually but not physically: Anthony Bailey Papers, Susanne Langer Papers

How to get and reuse structured description from donors, curators, acquisitions

Whenever possible, documentation created and acquired during the acquisition process should be shared with archives staff to streamline archival description, whether at accessioning or processing. This may include notes received from the donor or transferring office on the provenance of the material, accompanying paper or electronic folder lists created by the donor, office or acquisitions staff; or background secondary sources consulted.

Oftentimes information accumulated during the acquisitions process may inform or affect how the collection is described by the processing staff. Sharing this information can also prevent processing staff from duplicating research.

Collection summaries, or notes gathered by acquisitions staff, may be repurposed into MARC record collection descriptions; folder lists can be manipulated into finding aids, and secondary source material can be used in biographies or administrative histories in MARC records or finding aids.

Collection summaries

Collection summaries can be created to accompany all types of accessions, including personal papers, university records, and records of associated organizations. These

documents provide contextual information for accession, including historical and provenance details, highlights of the collections, related collections at the acquiring institution and beyond, and potential hazards or preservation issues. The information recorded in the summary may give processing staff additional information which could affect the manner in which it is described.

For repositories using ArchivesSpace, the document path can be listed on the accession record, and a paper copy can be filed in the control file. This allows for easy access for processing staff who may use some of this information for descriptive tasks, in MARC records and finding aids when processing, or for planning for conservation treatment.

In addition to processing staff, public services staff also find summaries very helpful for providing reference assistance to accessioned (but minimally processed) material.

Donor and office generated lists

Leveraging the assistance of donors and transferring offices can greatly streamline archival work from analysis in accessioning to description in processing.

Depending on the donor, it can be advantageous to ask the donor or assisting party to create a box or folder list for the acquisition. Archival staff can provide an Excel template with instructions, and the donor can fill in the columns with requested information. If this is not possible, acquisitions staff, and frequently student workers, can list these accessions at the box and/or folder level upon arrival at the repository using the same Excel template.

Similarly, when working with offices on campus to transfer their records, archivists should recognize that these are Harvard University records that are subject to Harvard University access restrictions preventing access to the records for fifty to eighty years, depending on content. By a Harvard Corporation vote of 1995, University records "include all forms of recorded information regardless of physical characteristics, created, received, recorded, or legally filed in the course of University business or in pursuance of the University's legal obligations." When acquiring these records, archivists should consult the General Records Schedule (GRS, https://grs.harvard.edu) to determine the permanent disposition of the records once their retention period has passed since the GRS applies to all faculties and academic centers, departments, affiliates and allied institutions, projects, and initiatives of the University.

Requiring an office to submit an electronic box and folder list to transfer records to the repository can save staff time especially for these University records which may not be available to researchers for several decades. It also allows for easier GRS review of the contents by archivists and more streamlined access to the records for public services staff fielding questions from the transferring office after accessioning.

By acquiring or creating these lists at the point of accession, intellectual control of the collection or records is attained, and processing staff can manipulate this data into

finding aids and make them discoverable to users. In other words, if the description is good, the processing is complete.

Authority work

Completing authority work at the point of accession can streamline descriptive work for processing staff and improve discoverability of preliminary descriptive products. Consulting the Library of Congress National Authority File or HOLLIS+ for the proper form of established names, or forming creator names according to DACS or RDA at the start of the accessioning process diminishes the time needed to create a MARC record for the collection as the cataloger will not need to take the extra step of researching the creator's history or if the office/person has a previously established names. Furthermore, the correct name to use will already be on the accession paperwork, thus simplifying filing and the creation of labels for the accession.

Library of Congress Authorities: http://authorities.loc.gov/
HOLLIS +: http://holliscatalog.harvard.edu
DACS Naming principles and Archival Authroity records: Section 2.6; Sections 9-13 : https://www2.archivists.org/groups/technical-subcommittee-on-describing-archives-a-content-standard-dacs/dacs
Example: Main Entry Authority Work Form

See Harvard-wide requirements for stewardship on Page 45 for a list of standard elements accession records must include.

The accessioning toolkit linked on Page 59 provides templates and real-world examples of forms from a number of Harvard repositories.

PROCESSING PLANS

In many cases, effective accessioning practices will provide enough description for a user to successfully use the collection. In other cases, and for a variety of reasons (user demand, repository priorities, funding, etc), collections will need to be more fully processed.

(See also page 30 on Setting processing priorities for an overview of how the above determination could be made.)

If a collection needs more descriptive or physical attention than the level given at accessioning, archivists should create a processing plan to detail their appraisal decisions and describe the needed archival intervention.

Processing Plan

What: A processing plan lays out the work needed for a collection to be accessible and usable at a determined processing level.

***Why*:** A processing plan documents the rationale for work performed on a collection, and allows for transparency of practice among archivists and between archivists and users. Processing plans can function as internal documentation and provide continuity in times of staff change. They can assist in the project management of work on a particular collection, especially a large one where work is shared by a number of staff and/or student workers. In many cases, research done for processing plans can be used in (or used as) a finding aid.

***How*:** A processing plan should be created for each collection worked on by an archivist. Parts or the entirety of the processing plan can be created at the point of accessioning, and the document may allow for input by staff in different departments or units, etc. It can flow from or incorporate other formal documentation created during accessioning, collection development considerations, etc. A plan can also be created by professional staff with work outlined to be followed by student employees or paraprofessional staff.

In addition to basic information about the size, provenance, and physical condition of a collection, a processing plan should document archivists' appraisal decisions based on the collection's general research value, as well as any other special values to the repository. Archivists can record the level of description they feel is appropriate to each collection, or to each part of the collection. Archivists must assess restriction issues within the collection, if any, and suggest reasonable practices or methods to balance access to the material with the needs of the donor/repository/institution.

A processing plan should be a living document - it can be revised during the course of the processing project if necessary, and good practice includes returning to the processing

plan at the end of the processing project to record additional decisions made, time spent, lessons learned, etc. Copies of processing plans can be kept in a collection control file for future review.

See Harvard-wide requirements for stewardship on Page 45 for a list of elements a processing plan must include.

The processing toolkit on Page 59 provides templates and real-world examples of processing plans from a number of Harvard repositories.

PROCESSING PRACTICES

There are varying degrees of processing, ranging from the work that could be done in an optimal situation to the standard amount of work necessary to make a collection accessible. Most processing work tends to be a compromise between the two, and each repository will need to evaluate and understand what it determines to be the most appropriate amount of work its staff should perform to make all collections both discoverable and usable to its users.

Effective management of a processing program will aid in the use of efficient processing practices. Individual archivists, paraprofessionals, and student workers should have a good idea of the options available to them in terms of processing levels and the practices and expectations therein. Shared attitudes and outlooks on the part of managers, archivists, and other archival staff members is important to make an efficient processing program work. Transparency and communication within a repository will greatly facilitate some of the practices outlined below - curator or donor-created collection descriptions or box and file lists can be repurposed by archivists, for example.

The following general approaches are intended to be format-agnostic, and apply to all collections or portions of collections. More specific workflows for photographs, printed materials, audiovisual materials, artifacts, and born digital content can be found in the various local processing manuals shared in the processing toolkit.

Overall Approaches

- A repository's first priority should be to gain collection level control over all its holdings. Detailed processing work should wait until all holdings are minimally accessible.
- There is not a "one size fits all" standard for arrangement, description, or preservation across all collections or even within collections. The amount of work required to achieve the golden minimum can vary from collection to collection, or series to series.
- An archival processor should weigh how much description, organization, or preservation is truly necessary and then flexibly apply the most appropriate arrangement, description, or preservation techniques. One should ask "What are the costs?" and "What are the benefits?" for almost every processing action, and then find the most efficient way to achieve sufficient intellectual and physical control over the materials.
- Always look for the "golden minimum". For each collection, perform the minimum amount of work necessary to make a collection usable. Any work beyond the minimum should be justified, e.g., for research value or other repository requirements.
- Use archival appraisal at every step of collection lifecycle.

Practices for Intellectual and Physical Arrangement

- Intellectual arrangement should reflect context and function, and enable users to understand and navigate the finding aid.
- Minimize physical arrangement or re-arrangement of files. Look for "good enough" organization or an even more efficient approach is to leave the folders in their original order.
- Physical arrangement need not match intellectual arrangement; i.e., it is not necessary to bring all the folders that are part of a series together physically; the finding aid can be used to intellectually bring together related material stored in different containers.
- Resist the impulse to handle material at the item level, particularly when it comes to arranging items within a folder or removing items from folders and placing them in other folders.

Practices for mitigating risk/working with restricted materials

- Assess risk to determine the appropriate level of review for restricted materials.
- Proactively work with donors to identify restricted materials to reduce intake of problematic materials.
- If a large number of materials in a collection are restricted, consider postponing processing the collection until a majority of collection materials are open for research.
- Balance ethics of access with the ethics of protecting information with legal, institutional, or donor-imposed restrictions.

Practices to increase access

- Develop or revise reading room policies to account for use of unprocessed or efficiently processed material. Additionally, tracking use of collections will determine if collections are in high demand, if the level of description is not adequate for user needs, or if the materials are found to be at risk.

Physical handling and preservation practices

- Reuse existing folders as much as possible.
- Avoid removing fasteners, unless clearly warranted by presence of rust.
- Approach preservation issues with holistic risk-assessment. For example, while newsprint and other acidic papers may damage other paper, storing the entire collection in a climate-controlled facility will mitigate this risk. Time spent on preservation photocopying could instead be spent on descriptive work.

Descriptive practices

- The level of description can vary within the collection. Some portions of a collection may warrant more detailed description, while others may not.

- Repurpose existing description when possible. If there are existing box lists, inventories, etc. that are serviceable and can be made available in electronic form, consider linking collection-level descriptions to those inventories.
- Not every collection requires extensive historical/biographical notes. Write brief historical/biographical and scope and content notes where appropriate. Don't restate formats in the scope notes if already listed in a title. If extensive bibliographies of individuals or organizational histories already exist, refer to them, don't duplicate them.
- Historical/biographical notes should give a brief history of the person or organization who is the creator of the collection, and in particular, highlight the creator's historical connection to the items in the collection. In addition to the front matter of a finding aid, these notes can also be employed as warranted at the series, subseries, or folder level to give context to frequent correspondents or other prominent figures or organizations in the collection. The creator's most known accomplishments or titles or the part of their history that relates to the items at hand should be emphasized.
- Use scope and content notes strategically. Consider describing collections in aggregate via a more extensive scope and content note over listing individual folder titles. Provide enough detailed information to help users determine that a collection is appropriate to their research needs.
- In addition to delivering a basic summary of the various formats in collections, scope and content notes can also provide rich, content description of the records, detailing the activities or functions that they illustrate and possible larger historical trends. Employing subject keywords that researchers may use to search for the collection in the scope and content note can make the collection more discoverable by online catalogs and search engines.

More thoughts on descriptive notes

Describing material in aggregate is often difficult, and requires training and practice in archival theory. This intellectual work is where a professionally trained archivist can shine. Analysis of a set of materials, how they were produced, and what kinds of research they might support, is at the core of an archivist's work.

Creating effective scope and content notes supports efficient processing practices by potentially allowing for the material to be described in less detail at the file level. All Harvard processing manuals attached in the processing toolkit (page 59) provide guidance on what makes an effective scope note, but we have also reproduced some of that guidance here:

The scope and content may include information about any or all of the following, as appropriate:

- Functions, activities, transactions, and processes that generated the materials being described
- Documentary forms or intellectual characteristics of the material being described
- The content dates, that is, the time period covered by the intellectual content of the material being described

- Geographic areas to which the material pertains
- Subject matter of the material, such as activities, events, people, and organizations
- Any other information that assists the user in evaluating the relevance of the materials, such as completeness, changes in location, ownership and custody while still in the possession of the creator, etc.

The following are examples of effective scope and content notes in Harvard finding aids:

The Ferrari Hardoy Archive

Marie C. McCormick papers

Harvard Commons records

Correspondence and faculty reports by John Farrar, Harvard professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy

Samuel Shapleigh papers (note in particular Series II)

Stanley S. Surrey papers

Kristen R. Yount papers

The following are examples of effective biographical, historical, or administrative history notes in Harvard finding aids:

The Alison and Peter Smithson Archive

Erich Lindemann papers

Harvard School of Public Health Longitudinal Studies of Child Health and Development records

Boston Women's Fund records

PROCESSING LEVELS

What: Processing levels outline the basic intellectual and physical tasks to undertake for each collection depending on an archivist's appraisal of the material's research value and physical needs.

Why: One way to expand the notion of what a "processed" collection looks like is to utilize different tiers or levels of processing. Using such a framework gives flexibility in available practice, and allows for more intensive (intellectual and physical) work to focus on the collections with the highest research potential. By introducing a shared language, we can be more transparent (to users, but perhaps more importantly to our successors) about why we did the level or amount of work we did.

One of the joys of working with archival material is experiencing a wide range of distinct and different records. Agreeing to use a framework of basic processing levels allows individual archivists as well as archival processing managers or programs to choose different options for each collection depending on their appraisal of the research value of the materials themselves.

How: Evaluate each collection either at the point of accession or at the point of processing. An ideal accessioning program would include a preliminary recommendation of each collection's processing needs.

For example, organizational records in titled folders might be served by a basic series arrangement and analysis of the creators and functions of, and subjects contained in, the records. Refoldering and reboxing may be unnecessary beyond the physical control procedures undertaken during accessioning.

Harvard-wide processing levels

In 2009, a group of archivists at Harvard repositories created a processing level chart in order to facilitate data collection on a repository collection survey. The Joint Processing Guidelines Working Group combined that document with more granular processing levels currently used in specific repositories to lay out details of processing levels we suggest be used widely at Harvard repositories. They do not differ too intensely from the 2009 levels, so those repositories using that document should not have to significantly alter practices. A compressed reference chart with information on each level can also be found in the Processing Toolkit (see page 59).

***NOTE**: With good accessioning practices, all collections can and should begin at a Level I.

UNPROCESSED

***NOTE**: Listing of unprocessed options here is an acknowledgement of legacy material, and a recognition that there are sometimes reasons to close collections until processed or for a period of time.

Unprocessed A

Access: CLOSED

Discoverability: NONE. Truly hidden from users.

Types of Collections: Legacy

Unprocessed B

Access: CLOSED. Mediated access may be possible

Discoverability: HOLLIS record

Description: **Required:** MARC record with DACS single-level required elements

Preservation: Rehoused in archival boxes if necessary

Appraisal and assessment for restrictions: Collection-level appraisal is required to determine closure.

Types of Collections: Collections with time-bound, university records, or other donor restrictions; with fragility or other format concerns.

Example:

The papers of Bill Baird are closed until processed because most of the 300+ linear feet of material arrived unfoldered (loose papers), in poor physical condition (some mold), or in need of careful appraisal for restriction issues. Providing access to users without physical and intellectual processing would not be possible.

The Joseph B. Barron papers are closed until processing due to the presence of restricted patient information.

LEVEL I "STANDARD"

***NOTE**: The vast majority of collections coming into our repositories can and should be described at this level at accessioning. **There are many collections for which this level of processing is the best and most appropriate level**, see examples below for several of these.

Access: OPEN TO RESEARCH. Some parts of collections may be restricted or need mediated access depending on the types of records.

Discoverability: HOLLIS record, possible online finding aid or link to description in another format (see Processing Toolkit for options and workflows)

Description: Material is described at the collection-level

Required: MARC record with DACS single-level required elements

Optional: MARC record with DACS single-level optimum elements

Optional: Finding aid with DACS single-level optimum elements

Optional: Archival authority work performed

Preservation: Rehoused in archival boxes. Possibly other preservation measures as needed to make collection usable for users.

Appraisal and assessment for restrictions: Restrictions, if necessary, should happen at the collection or series level.

Physical arrangement: If necessary to support use

Types of collections: Collections for which only a basic level of access is required. Smaller collections (size may vary by repository, often less than 2-5 linear feet or consisting of a few items)

Examples:

The Thomas S. Walsh day book is a small collection consisting of one volume and its size was the deciding factor in providing discoverability via a HOLLIS record. This collection is described in detail with DACS single-level optimum elements and strongly emphasizes the collecting areas of the repository. It is important to use terms in the description and subjects that are both familiar and relevant to the repository's patrons.

The American Dental Association Department of Library Services records is not a small collection, at a little over 54 cubic feet, however it was received in usable and well-preserved original order (two clear series, arranged alphabetically within each) and it requires no restriction screening. An excel folder list was created at the point of accession, and a standard MARC record and collection-level finding aid were created by repurposing accession record data. To expedite opening of the collection, the excel folder list was uploaded and linked to from the finding aid, rather than spending time to encode it in EAD. Staff will likely use the ArchivesSpace Excel Importer tool to generate an inventory within the finding aid as time allows.

The Records of the Harvard Neighbors was processed to Level I and provides basic access in HOLLIS to the three accessions which comprise this collection. The DACS-compliant HOLLIS record includes a brief statement on the organization's history, brief details about each of the three accessions, and minimal subject headings.

Gropius House Stereographs is a small collection comprised of a set of stereographs of the Gropius House in Lincoln, Massachusetts taken in 1944, with commentary for each view provided by Gropius. The collection is described with a single-level description in HOLLIS, with standard DACS description elements. No further description seemed necessary to make the collection immediately available and open for research.

LEVEL II "OPTIMUM"

Access: OPEN TO RESEARCH. Some parts of collections may be restricted or need mediated access depending on the types of records.

Discoverability: HOLLIS record, online finding aid

Description: Material is described at the series (and possibly file) level

Required: MARC record with DACS single-level optimum elements

Required: Finding aid with DACS single-level optimum elements

Material is described at the collection-level, inventory with box and/or file list may be used

Optional: Finding aid with DACS multilevel optimum elements

Material is described at the series-level or file-level; inventory with file listing is recommended

Optional: Archival authority work performed

Preservation: Rehoused in archival boxes; files rehoused only if necessary

Appraisal and assessment for restrictions: Restriction, if necessary, should happen at the series or subseries level.

Physical arrangement: If necessary to support use.

Types of collections: Large collections with anticipated moderate research use

Examples:

The Sanford Gifford papers were processed to Level II. The collection was arranged and described to the file level, including screening for and applying restrictions at the file level.

The Christopher Durang papers were processed to a Level II. Most of the collection was arranged and described to the file level. Individual folders were not described or put into order. A series of less important printed ephemera was left loose in the boxes and described at the series level, more of a Level I treatment. Restrictions were noted by the donor and clearly labeled and segregated.

The Polaroid Corporation records, series III: research and development records were processed to Level II. The materials were rehoused in archival boxes, however original folders were retained as they were deemed to be in good shape. Materials were arranged intellectually, not physically. The collection did not include any restricted materials.

The Gloria Sweeden papers were processed to a Level II. All correspondence was received folded in envelopes; unfolding letters was necessary to make the collection open for research. Description of the letters contents and relevance to research is provided at the collection level, with brief inventory of folders.

The Harvard Fatigue Laboratory records were processed to Level II. The record group is arranged into series and sometimes subseries, and is described to the file level, with original file titles transcribed in the finding aid. Numerous files are restricted due to the presence of personal and patient information, and these restrictions along with the dates of the restriction period are noted at the file-level.

The Harvard College Library Order Department letters were processed to Level II. This large record group of 160 cubic feet is arranged in chronological groups by academic year, and is described at the box level. Since these are University records, all post-1968 records are restricted according to Harvard University's 50 year access restriction. These restrictions are noted at the box level. This finding aid was created by exporting CSV data from a local location database and converting it into EAD. Boxes were then spot checked for accuracy.

LEVEL III "VALUE ADDED"

Access: OPEN TO RESEARCH.

Discoverability: Hollis record, online finding aid

Description: Material is described at the file (and possibly item) level

Required: MARC record with DACS single-level optimum elements

Required: Finding aid with DACS multilevel optimum elements

Required: Archival authority work performed

Preservation: Rehoused in archival boxes; archival folders used; preservation work done to mitigate rust, mold, fragility

Appraisal and assessment for restrictions: Restrictions, if necessary, should be applied at file-level. For some types of formats or collections, item-level appraisal may be appropriate.

Physical arrangement: Many collections processed to this level will have physical arrangement that matches intellectual arrangement. The intellectual description is what matters, however.

Types of collections: Collections with high historic value; with anticipated heavy research use; which require extensive screening for restrictions at the folder/item level. Item-level appraisal and/or description may be appropriate for A/V media (in some cases); significantly rare material; high-value visual material.

Examples:

The Salpêtrière Hospital records were processed to Level III, chiefly described to the item level, including file-level scope and content notes, with a few series described to the file level. Glass plate negatives, which

constitute the bulk of the collection, are arranged in the order in which they were received; no attempt was made to rearrange the plates chronologically, by patient, or by medical condition. All collection records, including negatives, photographic prints, and original plate sleeves, were rehoused in acid free enclosures and reboxed.

The José María Castañé collection of autographed portraits of military leaders were processed to a Level III. Description was provided at the Item level. Preservation and housing was also done at the item level. The collection was an artificial grouping wherein aggregation was not really an option. The collection came with individual listings of photographs so it made sense to use those and build description from there. The research value was presumed to be high. The collection was relatively small.

The papers of Susan Griffin were processed to a level III. Collection was arranged into series and described at the folder level, with more detailed descriptions of the series with material appraised as having a higher research value (correspondence, not book research files). Some formats (audiovisual and 3-d memorabilia) were described at the item-level. Material was placed into archival folders. The physical arrangement of material matches the intellectual arrangement.

The papers of the Swanton family were recently reprocessed to a level III. Collection was too small to arrange into series, but each file was intensely described with a scope note at that level. The age and fragility of some of the material, the fact that some of the material was slated to be digitized, and the prior and anticipated high research use led to the decision to process at this level. Material was placed in archival folders. The physical arrangement of material matches the intellectual arrangement.

The David A. Thomas papers were processed to Level III and are expected to have high use. The collection was arranged into series and subseries and described at the folder level. Materials were physically arranged to match intellectual arrangement. Restricted materials were applied at series, sub-series and folder level where appropriate. Collection included born-digital content which is described at the folder level.

The Harvard School of Public Health Longitudinal Studies of Child Health and Development records were processed to Level III as part of a CLIR-funded initiative focused on developing metadata for long-term access and discovery of research data collections. This collection was physically and intellectually arranged into a fairly granular series structure, described at the file-level, and the finding aid includes subseries-level links to digitized content hosted in Harvard's Dataverse.

The papers of James Vorenberg were processed to Level III because of the existence of records created during his tenure as Dean of the Law School.

The collection was arranged at the series and subseries level and described to the folder level. The existence of restricted material is noted in the scope and content note, series description, and folder level. Opening dates for restricted material is listed at the folder level. (Example: 13-7. Clerkship letters, 1999. "Contents of this folder closed until 2079".)

The Records of the Harvard College Library: William Coolidge Lane general files were processed to Level III due to their subject matter and frequent research requests. The collection was arranged in six series, and described at the folder level. In addition to robust biographical, historical, and scope and content notes at the collection level, the records also include additional notes at the folder level for items of particular historical interest.

The Ferrari Hardoy Archive was processed to Level III. Given the nature of the materials included, one creator with significant roles within three different professional associations in addition to a private practice, the collection was arranged in several series with description at the series and folder levels. Access was further enhanced with a series of indices to provide deeper access to names, topics, and/or genre of materials not included in the folder descriptions.

The Kenzō Tange Archive was processed to Level III particularly because of the significance of this collection for architecture worldwide, and in preparation for a massive digital initiative project that will allow visual online access to the collection. The collection consists mainly of architectural drawings and publications. Architectural drawings were arranged chronologically in a single series, with each architectural project comprising a subseries thereunder (with several folders per subseries). Each project or subseries includes a brief abstract note, main subject terms by building typology, and geographic location. Folders within projects include scope and content, scale, and form/genre of drawings. Description was further enhanced with titles of projects and geographic locations both in English and Japanese that allows for searching in both languages.

***See Processing Toolkit on Page 59 for Harvard repository-endorsed processing levels in a grid format

PROCESSING MANAGEMENT

Establishing processing priorities

As noted above, efficient processing depends on appraisal throughout a collection's lifestyle. Effective appraisal rests on understanding the priorities, users, and staff workflows of each individual repository. Even repositories with few archival staff members can assess user demand and set processing priorities. The following sections deal with prioritizing processing work, developing an assessment culture and program, and communicating clearly with staff and users.

What are processing priorities?

Competing resources, time, and staff can impact which collections are processed and when. Establishing a processing priorities policy and subsequent processing priorities procedures for incoming and backlogged collections will assist in determining what collections to process and what level of processing should be considered for both individual collections and the repository as a whole.

Why are processing priorities important?

Having a clear and concise approach to processing via a processing priority policy and guidelines will not only help repository staff more accurately manage workloads and meet goals, but can also provide transparency to staff, administrators, donors, and users about collection management. Priorities can answer questions such as why one collection was processed over another and manage expectations of how soon collections are going to be processed.

Before beginning

Before developing any processing priorities documentation the repository should know the extent of all of its holdings. It will be challenging to set any priorities if the repository does not have both physical and intellectual control over its materials. A repository should consider undertaking a baseline collection level backlog project before moving forward.

It is also recommended that the repository clearly define what level of access is considered acceptable and then outline how that access will be achieved through processing.

Developing a processing priorities policy

Every repository will have a unique policy with a list of priorities reflecting institutional needs and collections, but at a minimum a processing priorities policy should include

guiding principles for what to process and what levels of processing should be considered for individual collections and for the repository as a whole (see Processing Levels section for more information). The policy should be written using consistent and concise language, avoiding archival jargon and acronyms when possible, and tie directly into the repository's collection development policy. As with any policy, allowing enough flexibility to accommodate changing internal or external circumstances is highly recommended.

Developing processing priorities procedures

A logical product of the processing priorities policy are processing priorities procedures, which will allow repository staff to make decisions about which collections to process following agreed upon criteria. The criteria for prioritization will likely vary by repository, however it is recommended that decisions regarding the priorities assigned to collections include the following common criteria:

- Adherence to the repository's collection development policy.
    - Does the collection add to the strengths of or fill gaps in the repository's existing collections? Does the collection create new direction for the repository or institution?
- Support of institutional priorities.
    - Does the collection support programming and curriculum needs?
    - Does the processing of the collection enhance the image or the mission of the repository or institution?
    - Is the collection relevant for funding purposes or public relations?
    - Is the repository obligated to process the collection based on institutional requirements?
- Current research demand. **To learn more about use and user needs, see the Assessment Module "User and User Assessment"
    - What is the anticipated research value and use of the collection?
    - Has the increased use or demand of a previously processed collection warrant more granular processing?
    - Over the past year, how often have users sought out or requested materials on specific topics substantially documented in a particular collection?
    - How rare is a collection's documentation of a particular topic? How deep or detailed?
- Collection content and condition.
    - What is the physical condition of the collection? Are there preservation risks that could warrant immediate processing, including the presence of born-digital content on physical storage media?
    - What is the extent of the collection? Can the collection be processed in a year or is it a multi-year project?
    - How much arrangement or organization is needed to make the materials accessible?
    - Does the collection have an extensive amount of restricted records that will limit access and use of the collection?

In addition to the common criteria, decisions regarding the priority assigned to a collection can be guided by other aspects of the collection itself, including donor agreements, grants and external funding sources, accruals for already processed collections, and digitization requests. Staff time required and collections that would be interesting or unique to process could also factor into prioritization.

Once the criteria has been devised, the next step is to determine what methodology to use to assess unprocessed collections. There are various strategies for developing and managing the prioritization of collections ranging from a simple ranking (high, medium, low) and decision matrix models (rating the impact and effort as high or low) to the more complex overall numeric ranking. Regardless of the strategy, it is important that a repository choose one methodology and be regular and systematic for prioritizing collections so that practices can be consistent for each collection. Examples of different strategies are provided in the processing toolkit.

The How - processing priorities in practice

The processing priority methodology selected by a repository can be used for assessing collections as they come in, for unprocessed collections currently held by the repository (backlog), or periodically throughout the year to evaluate progress and potentially realign processing goals.

As a practice, the assigning of priorities to collections should be a collective effort and all types of collections should be taken into consideration. In large repositories, key departmental staff, including those from the processing team, collection management, and reference, should be involved. It is recommended that the group assign a processing priority to each collection which in turn will dictate the processing level it will follow. Lower priority collections may be moved to a higher priority as time and resources permit. When creating the priority list, it is advisable to offset multi-year plan plans by scheduling smaller processing projects so that staff can periodically renew their sense of accomplishment.

The processing priorities policy, criteria, methodology, and prioritization decisions need to be documented and stored in a common location accessible to those who are impacted by them. It is important that the team responsible for processing priorities revisit and possibly revise the policy and criteria regularly as circumstances may shift overtime, with some aspects of processing becoming more or less important.

***See Processing Toolkit on Page 59 for priority-ranking templates and examples

ASSESSMENT

What is assessment?

Broadly speaking, assessment is the process of developing an objective understanding of the state or condition of a thing through observation and measurement. Assessment should be based on systematic, consistent, and purposeful gathering of information/data (metrics) to support successful outcomes, promote continuous improvement, and enable strategic decision making.

In the context of archival processing at Harvard, the goal of this section is to foster a culture of assessment around processing and to provide some basic guidelines and tools for making data-driven decisions about processing priorities, planning, and practices, which will in turn help improve both outcomes and outputs.

Why is assessment important?

Assessment help repositories gain an accurate and meaningful understanding of what needs exist, and how to efficiently and effectively address those needs. This understanding helps staff to:

- Measure and communicate the size and scope of our holdings
- Prioritize work (descriptive and preservation activities, processing queue, etc)
- Allocate current resources
- Advocate for additional/new resources
- Improve and refine practices and policies

But I don't have time for assessment!

While assessment may seem like a luxury activity in environments where time and resource limitations make it challenging to keep up with day-to-day operations, even very small-scale assessment efforts, if thoughtfully constructed, can have a beneficial impact on processing outcomes. When resources are limited, assessment can help ensure that the repository staff is working efficiently and effectively to put those limited resources toward the right efforts.

How to do it.
The "Areas of assessment" section that follows will cover in greater detail approaches for three particular types of assessment, but here are some general tips for assessment efforts:

Where to begin: Assessment isn't just collecting data for the sake of collecting data, it's deciding what is the RIGHT data to collect to support a repository's assessment need.

Determine assessment needs first, and then decide what data to collect and how to collect and analyze it. Consider: what questions do you want to answer, and what data do you need to answer them? (See the "Example Assessment Scenarios" section for ideas). It's fine to start small and scale up as needed.

Consistency is key: Whatever data is collected, it's important to collect it consistently. It's hard to analyze and use data that has not been recorded in a standard way. Consider creating detailed instructions for how data should be recorded, particularly if multiple staff members will be doing the data collection.

Monitor and analyze: Depending on the scale and scope of the data being collecting, archivists may want to perform a periodic quality review to check for errors in data entry so that they can be corrected retroactively and/or going forward. Likewise, decide how the data will be analyzed and how regularly this will be done (quarterly, annually, as-needed, etc.).

Areas of assessment

1. Collections assessment

Overview
One way of thinking of individual collections, and by extension the overall collection within a repository, is to understand what level of physical and intellectual control there is over them in the repository, and what information would be useful to collect in order to gain that control and for what purpose.

A comprehensive collection survey is an essential foundation for collection management because it can enable a department or repository to:

- analyze current state and condition of collections
- establish processing priorities
- provide a rational basis for decision making
- identify strengths and gaps for collection development
- plan for digitization, preservation, and reformatting projects
- appraise content and value of holdings

A collections survey can be scoped to cover a limited group of collections, or entire holdings within a repository. The data collected is generally quantitative (extent and type of materials) and qualitative (context, content, condition, research value):

- **quantitative data** will require establishing parameters for what will be measured, and may include (but is not limited to): extent (at the appropriate level), size (of materials, number of containers), total volume/holdings counts

(including onsite/offsite). Quantitative data is easier to analyze than qualitative data.

- **qualitative data** will require establishing parameters for value judgements that are related to and may include (but is not limited to): existing arrangement and/or access (existing discoverability points/ HOLLIS record/other); existing description and/or intellectual control (box lists/paper finding aids/online finding aids); as well as gathering data that will require value judgements such as physical condition (risk vs value / special format needs); research value (strengths/collection development gaps); appraisal (in relation to current collection development policies/deaccessioning).

Establish a strategy and methodology for the collection survey before gathering data. The use of checklists, spreadsheets, controlled vocabularies, or other standardized ways of collecting data should be determined before carrying out the survey.

Suggested data to collect
At a minimum repositories should aim to get a sense of what collections they hold, where these are stored, how much space they occupy, and if they are discoverable. This information will help staff better understand and report on holdings as a whole, identify hidden collections that should be made discoverable, and plan for space and stacks management.

- **Identifier** (collection/call number)
- **Title**
- **Creator**
- **Extent*** (both physical and digital)
- **Location(s)**
- **Description/discoverability status** (accession record, HOLLIS, finding aid, local inventory etc)

* *Make early decisions as to how to measure collection extent (linear feet vs. cubic feet, gigabytes versus megabytes, etc). Remember: consistency is key!*

Once basic physical and intellectual control of all holdings is established, gaining further understanding of the collections is a good next step. This information will help plan preservation projects, identify collection development strengths and gaps, establish processing priorities, plan digitization projects, identify high-use collections for outreach efforts or stacks/location management, and support reporting and annual planning.

- **Date range**
- **Language**
- **Physical condition** (can rate on a scale of 1-5 (quantitative approach), and/or describe preservation needs such as rehousing or reformatting (qualitative approach))
- **Special formats** present (electronic media, audio-visual media, etc)
- **Processing status**
- **Access status** (closed/open)

- **General subject matter**
- **Research value**
- **Anticipated processing level** required for access
- **Date(s) of acquisition and/or accession**
- **Acquisition status** (gift, purchase, transfer, deposit, loan, etc)
- **Frequency of use**

2. Processing practice & workflow assessment

Overview
Tracking processing metrics (basic information about processing projects and the time spent on them) can help to estimate the time and cost of future processing projects, advocate for the resources necessary to process collections, and evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of local processing practices.

Suggested data to collect (for each collection/processing project)
Collection/project tracking involves recording information about the approach taken for a given collection or processing project. At the most basic level, if data on the total length of the processing project and the collection volume is tracked, it can be used to calculate the average amount of time it takes to process collections (for example, the number of linear or cubic feet per week), which will enable staff to form a basic (but informed) idea of how long it will take to process future collections based on their size. This approach works best for linear, focused processing projects that do not have many significant breaks in the workflow.

- **Title**
- **Identifier**
- **Date range**
- **Collection extent** (both "start" and "finish" extents, for both physical and digital volume)
- **Start date and end date** of processing project

Because the size, scope, and complexity of collections can vary widely, tracking information about these other variables can help staff make more accurate time and expense estimates because they can determine the time and costs required to process a collection *of a certain type* (considering complexity, staffing available, format-based needs, etc).

- **Complexity level** of collection: this is the perceived amount of effort and time required to arrange and describe a collection (see example complexity scale in the resources section below)
- The **level of processing** to be performed
- **Staffing assigned** to the project (full time/half time, use of interns, etc)
- **Presence and volume of special formats** such as audio-visual and electronic media

Tracking the time spent on discrete processing tasks can help to better understand and evaluate overall processing workflows, and better communicate the cost of processing in terms of the specific activities and specialized skills required to donors and resource allocators.

Record time spent (to the quarter hour) on discrete processing tasks:

- Surveying and planning
- Rehousing (refoldering, reboxing, etc)
- Inventorying
- Physical arrangement
- Preservation activities
- Digital processing (disk imaging, extracting use copies, analysis, etc)
- Description: finding aid authoring
- Description: MARC record creation
- Box labeling and barcoding
- Encoding in EAD and/or data entry into ArchivesSpace

3. Use & user assessment

Overview

Developing an understanding of who the repository's users are, what they need, and how they navigate the collections and descriptive surrogates can meaningfully improve processing outcomes. Use and user data can help to make informed decisions about processing priorities, evaluate the efficacy of processing and description practices, and identify collections that would benefit from additional or more granular processing (supporting the iterative processing workflow). For example, it may be useful to compare high-use and low-use collections, and examine whether there is a difference in the level of descriptive or surrogate access between these collections. Knowing what *types* of collections (topics, time periods, etc) are high-use may also help inform future processing priorities.

There are many methods for gathering information about use and users of a repository's collections, some of which are outlined below. If working with public services staff who already collect some of this data, consider requesting access to their tracking systems, such as request ticket systems and use statistics databases or logs.

Suggested data to collect

Use statistics

Per the SAA-ACRL/RBMS Standardized Statistical Measures and Metrics for Public Services report:

- Basic approach: track the **number of times a collection is accessed for any use**
- Advanced approach: track the **number of times a collection is accessed for specific uses:**
    - Reading room use

- Usage hours
- Reference use
- Exhibition use
- Instructional use
- Operational use
- Purpose of use
- Publication use
- Reproduction requests

Other data
Use and user assessment can further inform collection management in setting priorities as to physical location of collections, and prioritizing collections for processing. Data on use and user satisfaction with description surrogates may also help refocus processing practices that may improve public services workflows.

- **Movement of collections to/from HD** (can inform location/space management)
- Number of times ***unprocessed*** **collections are requested** (even if access is denied)
- **User demographics**
- **User survey** (soliciting direct feedback from users by asking questions that may be open-ended or targeted to specific areas of processing or descriptive work around which staff are seeking input)

Example assessment scenarios

Below are example assessment questions that can be answered with some of the data elements recommended above. For some of the more complex scenarios, guidance on how to analyze the data is also provided.

<u>General collections management</u>
What collections do we have and how are they described?
Data needed:

- List of collections (titles, identifiers, etc)
- Description status

What percentage of our collections need to be rehoused?
Data needed:

- Total number of collections
- Physical condition

Onsite storage space is at a premium; what collections are currently stored onsite that could be candidates for moving off site, and likewise, what collections should be stored onsite that aren't currently?
Data needed:

- List of collections (titles, identifiers, etc)
- Frequency of use

- Physical condition
- (optional) Research value

Processing planning

What collections should be our next processing priorities?

Data needed for all collections:

- List of collections (titles and/or identifiers)
- Processing status
- Description status
- Extent
- Research value
- Subject matter
- Physical condition
- Number of use requests (for unprocessed but discoverable collections)

How to analyze: weigh any or all of the above factors depending on local needs and available staffing.

How long will it take to process this new collection/our backlog/this set of collections for this grant?

Data needed for selected collections:

- Processing status
- Description status
- Extent
- Anticipated processing level
- Collection complexity
- Average processing rate (time spent and extent for past processing projects, ideally with similar complexity and processing levels as the selected collections)

Processing practices

What percentage of our new collections (yearly accessions) are made available for research immediately upon accession?

Data needed:

- Number of collections accessioned each year
- Processing status
- Access status

Are we are acquiring collections at a greater rate than we are processing them? (The answer may inform local processing practices as well as collection development plans and appraisal practices).

Data needed:

- List of acquisitions (Collection title, accession number, etc)
- Date of acquisition
- Extent
- List of processed collections (titles and/or identifiers)
- Date processing completed
- Extent

How to analyze: Compare the total volume of collections acquired in a given year to the total volume of processed collections.

We're experimenting with opening collections with minimal (collection-level only) description created at the point of accession. How does this approach impact discoverability and use?
Data needed for each collection:

- Level of processing
- Date processing completed
- Research value
- Number of requests/uses

How to analyze: Compare the number of uses of fully processed collections to minimally described collections with similar research value within a given year.

Is team processing more efficient than archival processing?
Data needed for completed processing projects:

- Collection extent
- Collection complexity level
- Processing level
- Staffing configuration
- Total hours spent processing

How to analyze: Compare the average processing rate (hours/cubic foot) for collections processed by an individual vs. by a team, ideally comparing collections of similar complexity and processing level.

<u>Access & discovery</u>
We have some collections with extensive paper finding aids. We're interested in scanning these to create PDFs and link to them from their respective MARC records. How much time will we save by not encoding them?
Data needed for previously processed collections:

- Extent
- Average time spent encoding finding aids

How to analyze: Calculate an approximate encoding rate (# hours per cubic foot, for example) and apply it to the extent of the collections for which scanned paper finding aids will be made available.

What collections are high priorities for digitization?
Data needed:

- Number of requests/uses (onsite and offsite)
- number of reproduction requests

COMMUNICATION

Implementing efficient processing practices will require changing some practices in most repositories. Communicating these changes with both internal and external stakeholders is extremely important. Recognizing the value of clear and open communication will facilitate dialogue that can lead to better assessment and use of archival collections.

Internal communication

Repositories across Harvard differ greatly both in staff size, and in work responsibilities of those staff. Some of the following suggestions are geared more toward repositories with larger, and more differentiated, staff.

Impact on Research or Public Services staff

When accessioning, consider not only the end user, but also Research or Public Services staff. Whether fulfilling requests for outside users or for offices on campus, accurate accession descriptions can greatly help Research Services locate the resources that they need, even if the accession is not completely processed.

As the first point of contact in many repositories, Research Services will keenly feel the impact of changes in accessioning procedures that allow more collections to be open for research with (perhaps) less granular descriptions. Explaining the changes and the reasoning behind them, as well as the benefits, will greatly help Research Services staff and their work with users.

If Research Services expects to see very orderly and traditionally processed collections in the reading room, it is advantageous to spend time outlining how this might change if accessioned material is made immediately available. A good heads up on what to expect can go a long way towards quelling uncertainty and anxiety.

Potential impact on Research Services procedures and policies

Repositories have a number of different access policies in place; some of these may be affected by changes in accessioning, processing, and granting access to collections outlined in the Guidelines.

While the benefits of opening all collections (even if unprocessed) will appeal to users, and reducing (at least intellectually) repository backlogs will please archives staff, both groups will likely be faced with more responsibility and work compared with those used to orderly and traditionally processed collections.

Fulfilling off-site reproduction requests may become more difficult, e.g., if a collection is open to research with just a high-level description, an interested user might require more in-person mediation in order to get more information or order a reproduction of a part of the collection. This is the kind of topic that should be discussed throughout a

repository, so that all staff are aware of the interdependence of each different department.

Repositories should also consider how to handle user discovery of material potentially posing privacy concerns.

Additionally, tracking use of collections will determine if collections are in high demand, if the level of description is not adequate for user needs, or if the materials are found to be at risk. It's good to remember that processing is iterative and knowing from users what is and isn't working is a great way to prioritize processing work.

Impact on Collections/Curatorial Departments

It is really important to communicate changes within archives processing departments as widely as possible, this includes up and down and across the organization. A key group is those responsible for working with donors, transferring departments, and dealers. It can be helpful to frame processing changes in terms of the positive shifts. For instance, with our shift in processing practices, curators can expect to see a basic collection level description within a standard amount of amount of time. This timeline is something that the curator should happily relay to donors. Take time to show curatorial/collections divisions what a typical collection may look like when processed to Level I, Level II, and Level III.

Curatorial staff also play an important role in gathering, creating, or contributing to the collection summary needed at the point of accession. Open communication lines can greatly assist in repurposing such data, a needed efficiency.

Curators can be instrumental in communicating with donors the importance of donor-created description as well. In addition, how a donor's collection will be impacted by this new workflow can and should be communicated to donors. They should be made aware that their donation will likely be immediately made open for research with minimal processing. Explanations on the potentially added value of more granular processing may even result in donor providing financial support for more in-depth processing.

External communication

Impact on Users

In general, the impact on users of opening access to all collections is a positive one. By providing a full picture of a repository's holdings, users can use their own expertise in determining what is and is not relevant for them. Without a collection level description, users have no way of knowing what we have.

Finding clear ways to communicate to users what they might expect from a less restrictive approach to "what a processed collection looks like" is important. Users who are used to working with folders where correspondence is filed by date can be confused when they are given a box with correspondence filed loosely by year, or a range of years,

or interspersed throughout the collection. In general, collections with no or minimal processing will likely result in users needing more time for research as they may have to go through more material to find what is relevant to their research. Repositories should consider finding a way to articulate the level of processing to users in language that is meaningful to them. Even the use of the term "unprocessed" is often not meaningful to users. The Joint Processing Guidelines Working Group welcomes ideas about how to do this work in a "One-Harvard" way. Is there a way to include this information in the collection Hollis record or finding aid? Could we make a webpage with information to link out to? We will consider these approaches in our second year of work.

Reproduction requests from remote users may be made more difficult if more collections are made open to research with less granular level of detail. Individual repositories must be aware of this and be prepared to change their policies on reproductions if necessary.

Proposed Harvard-wide standard access statements

Providing clear, user-friendly information regarding the conditions under which a collection may be accessed is essential to enabling its use. Because the HOLLIS record is often the first discovery point for users, we recommend providing a brief access statement in the MARC 506 for all collections, which can be expanded upon in the finding aid within the Conditions Governing Access note.

In an effort to provide informative, transparent, and consistent information about access to collections across Harvard, a list of standard access statements recommended for use in the MARC 506 is provided below (in bold). These statements are designed to be specific enough to communicate to users what they need to know to make access arrangements, but generic enough to be applied across repositories at Harvard for the sake of consistency. The statements are also designed to represent DACS elements 4.1 (required), 4.2, and 4.3. Information in brackets is intended to be completed with local or collection-specific information.

Statements for open collections

Open collections (base statement):
Collection is open for research.
Append additional statements below to the above open statement as needed ("mix-and-match"):

Off site/appointment required:
Access requires advance notice; contact public services to request access or for more information: [contact info]**.**

Some files restricted for a term:
Some files [or Series #, etc] **are closed** [for XX years OR until 20XX] **due to** [the presence of restricted student/personal/health information OR university records OR donor-stipulated restrictions]**.**

Audio-visual or electronic media:

Access to [audio-visual or electronic] **media is premised on the availability of requisite** [equipment and/or software]**.**

Fragile materials:
Use of reproductions may be required for fragile materials.

Statements for closed collections

Closed pending processing:
Collection is closed pending archival processing to prepare it for access. Please contact public services to inquire about availability: [contact info]**.**

Closed pending processing with possibility of access after content screening:
Collection is closed pending archival processing to prepare it for access. Access may be granted at the discretion of public services staff pending screening of requested materials. Please contact public services to inquire about availability: [contact info]**.**

Closed for a term:
Collection is closed [for XX years or until 20XX] **due to** [the presence of restricted student/personal/health information OR university records OR donor-stipulated restrictions]**. Contact public services for more information:** [contact info]**.**

Closed for a term with option of petitioning for access:
Collection is closed [for XX years or until 20XX] **due to** [the presence of restricted student/personal/health information OR university records OR donor-stipulated restrictions]**. Access may be granted via a petition to the Institutional Review Board** [or other permission-granting body, such as a department, office, or donor]**. Contact public services for more information:** [contact info]**.**

REQUIREMENTS FOR STEWARDSHIP OF ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

Accessioning

All collections and collection accruals are documented, discoverable, and made open for research within fiscal year of receipt[2]

Required elements for internal documentation:

1. Accession record

   Must include elements:

   Name of repository
   Collection title
   Collection creator (if known)
   Unique identifier (accession number or call number)
   Dates
   Extent (measured in linear or cubic feet, and gigabytes)
   Language of Material
   Description of the materials (Scope and Content)
   Conditions Governing Access (possibly with an agreed upon language)
   Date of receipt (or stated as unknown)
   Source of collection (or stated as unknown)

Required for discoverability, access, and use:

2. Collection level MARC record

   Must include elements:

   LDR
      bytes 7, 8 are coded as c and a for material managed as a collection
      Bytes 7, 8 are coded as m and a for material managed as a single item
   040 -- repository code
   041 -- language code
   1xx -- creator (if known)
   245

[2] Exceptions made for donor or repository restrictions

(subfield a) -- title
(subfield d) -- date

300

(first subfield a) -- measurement of space taken up in either linear or cubic feet or digital space in gigabytes
(second subfield a) -- parenthetical describing the containers

506 -- conditions governing access (possibly with an agreed upon language)
520 -- scope and content
546 -- language

3. Collection is open for access (or parts are restricted pending review) -- see Harvard Library access statements

4. Collection material is rehoused (if needed)

5. Assessment about collection's future processing needs, or its research value, is completed and recorded.

Optimal:

6. Accessioning is tracked in Harvard Library shared tool (currently ArchivesSpace)

7. Finding aid created with DACS single level required elements

   Must include elements:

   Title
   Creator (if known)
   Identifier
   Dates
   Extent
   Conditions Governing Access
   Scope and Content Note
   Language
   Repository name and location

Processing

All collections and collection accruals are internally documented, discoverable online, and made open for research with use of efficient practices. Repositories create and maintain a method of tracking what collections need what processing work and institute periodic reviews of processing priorities.

1. Processing plan created

   Elements of processing plan include:

   Collection title
   Collection creator (if known)
   Unique identifier (call number)
   Dates
   Extent (measured in linear or cubic feet and gigabytes, both start and end volume)
   Description of content of material
   Current arrangement of material
   Collection complexity rating
   Proposed processing level
   Proposed arrangement
   Start and end date of processing project

2. MARC record created (fields in BOLD are added to MARC record from accessioning)

   Must include elements:

   LDR -- bytes 7, 8 are coded as c and a
   040 -- repository code
   041 -- language code
   1xx -- creator (if known)
   245
   (subfield a) -- title
   (subfield d) -- date
   300
   (first subfield a) -- measurement of space taken up in either linear or cubic feet or digital space in gigabytes)
   (second subfield a) -- parenthetical describing the containers
   351 -- arrangement note

506 -- conditions governing access
520 -- scope and content
524 -- preferred citation
541 -- immediate source of acquisition (optional)
545 -- biographical or historical note
546 -- language
555 -- finding aids
561 -- custodial history/provenance (optional)
6xx -- access points

3. Finding aid created with required collection-level descriptive elements, access points, and with the appropriate description of subordinate components (series, subseries, files, etc) as determined by the assigned processing level.

4. Collection is open for access (or parts are restricted pending review) -- see Harvard Library access statements

5. Collection material is rehoused (if needed)

Optimal:

6. Finding aid added to and updated when user data suggests this would be useful

Assessment

Special collection repositories are able to report annually on the RBMS/SAA holdings metrics category 1 elements, processing outputs are tracked, and optimally some form of use and user data is tracked.

Required:

1. Number of titles managed as collections that are described online/discoverable

2. Number of titles managed as single items that are described online/discoverable

3. Physical space (in cubic or linear feet) and digital space (in gigabytes) occupied by titles managed as collections

4. Physical space (in cubic or linear feet) and digital space (in gigabytes) occupied by titles managed as single items

5. Processing output measured annually by repository

Optimal:

6. Counts and measures for collection material that is not yet described online

7. Counts of physical units held (volumes, sheets, audio cassettes, film reels, etc.) and of the containers (boxes, drawers, etc.) in which collection material is held

8. Locations of units

9. Processing priorities are locally maintained in a systematic way

10. Time spent processing processing is tracked

11. In collaboration with other departments within repository (if existent) a form of use and user data is captured

Communication

Access to archival material across Harvard Library is consistently communicated to all potential users both internal and external.

Required:

1. Use of one of the Harvard Library standardized access statements for each collection

Documentation

Special collections maintain and use locally devised documentation for repository specific processes.

Required:

1. Processing manual

2. Processing plan template

3. Control files

IMPLEMENTATION

We understand that changing practice is difficult. We believe that a programmatic shift in processing is more likely to succeed if it is principled and structured. We outline below two strategies for implementation. Below each strategy are our principles and an outline of the types of changes required in order to comply with the spirit of the principle. The two strategies should not be considered mutually exclusive. Each can be implemented independent of one another or take place concurrently.

We outline a work plan for the Joint Processing Guidelines Working Group (JPGWG) over the next year, involving Harvard Library-wide communication, documentation, and training.

Joint Processing Guidelines Implementation Strategies: A Two-Pronged Approach

Strategy for present and future work

Adopt a day forward approach, "Beginning on X date our repository will…"

Principle 1

- Shift resources to accessioning
- Adopt clear and standardized language in public-facing descriptions about access
- Communicate with those who interact with users on how to successfully provide reference services to minimally processed collections

Principle 2

- Shift resources to accessioning
- Develop workflow for easily reusing accession records as public-facing collection-level records
- Communicate with those who interact with users on how to successfully provide reference services to minimally processed collections

Principle 3

- Shift resources to accessioning
- Train staff in efficient processing practices
- Adopt Harvard Library-wide processing levels

Principle 4

- Assess what data is currently collected. Determine additional data to collect.
- Implement a yearly (or more often) review of processing priorities; consider how to track and use relevant data and/or priority matrix
- Begin thinking about and tracking relationship between collection description and use

Principle 5

- Communicate formally as well as informally across organization: blog posts, memos, open forums, reports, presentations, trainings, tweets
- Adopt clear and standardized language in public facing descriptions about access and use

Principle 6

- Develop local processing manuals, processing plan templates, processing priority matrix
- Develop a method for gathering information from collections/curatorial divisions about new acquisitions
- Develop standard deeds of gift/acquisitions agreements that address access and use with defaults at open
- Make sure all public-facing descriptions comply with national standards and are consistent locally
- Codify public services documentation on helping users with minimally processed collections

With the assistance of the Guidelines and additional training as needed, Strategy #1 is an approach we hope all repositories across Harvard Library are capable of implementing.

Strategy for retroactive work

Assess the status of access and description of existing collections and work to align with the approach outlined in the Principles.

Option A:
Shift all processing resources to conduct a collection assessment survey and a backlog remediation project

Option B:
Find resources to hire additional staff to conduct a collection assessment survey and a backlog remediation project

Option C:
Collaborate to find resources to conduct an extensive collection assessment survey and a backlog remediation project for all repositories across Harvard Library

Principle 1

- Conduct backlog assessment survey
- Conduct backlog remediation, baseline level access project

Principle 2

- Forms part of backlog remediation, baseline level access project

Principle 3

- Train staff in efficient processing practices
- Adopt Harvard Library-wide processing levels

Principle 4

- Same as Strategy #1

Principle 5

- Same as Strategy #1

Principle 6

- Same as Strategy #1

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Accessioning

Behrnd-Klodt, Menzi L. “Acquiring Archives : Transferring Ownership and Rights” in *Navigating Legal Issues in Archives*. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2008.

- Explanation of legal importance of documenting ownership of collections

Ellis, Judith, ed. *Keeping Archives*. Port Melbourne: Thorpe in association with the Australian Society of Archivists, 1993.

- Good chapter on accessioning by Paul Brunton and Tim Robinson. Lays out the importance of each step of the accessioning process. The chapter concludes with the following:
  “If time is limited, it is better to have accessioned all your archives and so have a basic level of control over them all, than to have completely processed only a small part of your holdings while the bulk of the records remain unaccessioned”
- Immediately following the Accessioning chapter is a chapter on Arrangement and Description, also by Brunton and Robinson, which discusses how accessioning data informs processing.

Miller, Frederic M. *Arranging and Describing Archives and Manuscripts*. Chicago: The Society of American Archivists, 1990.

- Excellent foundational chapter devoted to accessioning. Explains why it is important legally and intellectually, and how accessioning can be leveraged for archival description.

Shallcross, Michael and Christopher J. Prom, eds. *Appraisal and Acquisition Strategies*. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2016.

- Three foundational modules on accessioning, appraisal, and acquisition. All three focus on born-digital archives.
- The volume offers high-level, conceptual frameworks as well as very detailed and practical suggestions.
- Case studies and further reading sections in each module.

Weideman, Christine. “Accessioning as Processing.” *The American Archivist*, Vol. 69 (fall/winter), pgs. 274-283, 2006.

- This article explores the application of “More Product, Less Process” particularly at the point of accession.
- The methods were applied during the accessioning of two collections and the arrangement and description of a large collection of family papers.
- The author describes the work completed, the time it took, and the consequences for operations throughout the repository.

Processing

DACS: Describing Archives: A Content Standard. Chicago: Society of American Archivists.

- The content standard used by United States archivists when creating archival description, maintained by SAA.

Douglas, Jennifer. "Toward More Honest Description." *The American Archivist*: Spring/Summer 2016, Vol. 79, No. 1, pp. 26-55.

- The article encourages archivists to be more transparent to patrons about the "archival history" of a collection including documenting processing decisions and custodial history into description.
- A good article for those wanting to explore and expand the way in which we describe the materials in our repository.

Guidelines for Efficient Archival Processing in the University of California Libraries

- Good theoretical grounding in why to shift practices toward a focus on efficient processing.
- Provides very granular instructions on what physical processing to do/not to do when using efficient processing tactics.
- Suggests leaving audiovisual material in boxes served to the user - this may not be a practice all repositories want to follow.

Greene, Mark A. and Dennis Meissner. "More Product, Less Process: Revamping Traditional Archival Processing." *The American Archivist*: Fall/Winter 2005, Vol. 68, No. x, pp. 208-263.

- Calls for a shift in archivists approach: work differently in order to make collections open for research more quickly; focus more on user needs than on collection's (perceived preservation) needs
- Particularly focuses on making assessments (preservation, restrictions, description, etc.) at a higher (than item) level, and particularly for 20th century collections

Hackbart-Dean, Pam and Elizabeth Slomba. *How to Manage Processing in Archives and Special Collections*. Chicago: The Society of American Archivists, 2012

- Provides an excellent overview of the processing lifecycle including processing priorities, managing processing, administration, training, and evaluation and assessment.
- Excellent bibliographic essay points to foundational (and current as of 2012) archival books and articles related to processing. Also has good examples of processing plans and worksheets.
- Book isn't too long (147 pages), so it's an easy read to get a processing program up and running.

Hintz, Carrie. "Processing Levels: The Hows and Whys." Chaos -> Order blog. November 10, 2015.

- Great explanation of what to consider when deciding which processing level makes sense for a collection

- Emphasizes ways to think “on the collection level”

Roe, Kathleen D. *Arranging & Describing Archives & Manuscripts*. Chicago: The Society of American Archivists, 2005.

- Provides helpful background to professional practices and changing notions of arrangement and description
- Good chapters on “What “Entity” Should be Described?” and “Establishing Context” for records

Santamaria, Daniel A. *Extensible Processing for Archives and Special Collections*. Chicago: Neal-Shuman, 2015.

- A must read for any repository considering the implementation of extensible processing.
- Very good chapter on “attacking your backlog” and how a repository can use collections assessment surveys as part of a backlog reduction project.
- Excellent “real world” case studies; examples of processing plans, project management documents.

Assessment

Guidelines for Efficient Archival Processing in the University of California Libraries (See Section 3)

- Section 3B includes a guide for assessing individual collections when determining levels of effort to invest in processing (based on value, expected use, condition, complexity, and available resources
- Section SC includes a guide for establishing metrics related to processing rate; while Section 3D discusses labor allocations.
- Section 3G is specific to processing metrics, understood as critical for facilitating “data-driven decision making” with the emphasis on measuring processes.

Conway, Martha O’Hara and Merrilee Proffitt. 2011. *Taking Stock and Making Hay: Archival Collections Assessment*. Dublin, Ohio: OCLC Research. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8XByX_WWFPE

- Positions collection assessment as critical to collection management. It includes different collection surveys that are useful when thinking strategically about “meeting user needs, allocating available resources, and securing additional funding.”
- Includes a “how-to” guide of sorts that leads you step by step through an assessment project (from defining scope, methodology for gathering information (both qualitative and quantitative), and putting it all together so that it be of use.
- Includes Appendices with exemplary projects that link to additional readings, project documentation (with instructions and definitions)

Conway, Martha O'Hara, and Merrilee Proffitt. 2012. "The Practice, Power, and Promise of Archival Collections Assessment." *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage*, 13 (Fall): 100-112.

- Recognizes the role of research libraries and the increasing role of special collections within academic institutions vested in ground-breaking scholarship. Discusses the need to assess existing special collections, with the goal of reducing backlogs and effectively providing access to existing collections, while moving forwards towards the acquisition of new collections.
- Discusses exposing hidden collections, establishing processing priorities, assessing condition, and managing collections that have allowed–through successful collections assessment - archivists to shift from centered on their own collections to collaborations and possibilities of aggregated collection information systems that better serve teaching and research in the 21st century.

Novak-Gustainis, Emily R. 2012. "Processing Workflow Analysis for Special Collections: The Center for the History of Medicine, Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine as Case Study." *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage,* 13 (2): 113-128.

- Discusses in detail the implementation of an assessment methodology at Countway that enabled the analysis of processes for more efficient access to archives.
- Emphasizes the need for collecting and sharing operational data that improve communications around the full cycle of what is encompassed in making available a research resource.
- Includes methodology and findings (processing rates related to collection complexity, the tracking of granular processing activities, a tiered approach to processing, and projecting outputs and cost; resulting in a shift from "outputs-based to outcomes-evident assessment." Evidence as advocacy to facilitate change.

Processing Metrics Collaborative Wiki Bibliography

- A bibliography, and additional information, created around the "Processing Metrics Collaborative: Database Development Initiative." Developed at Countway.

Processing Manual for the Manuscript Unit of the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library (See Section 2.5 Processing Estimates):

- A quick, albeit maybe too basic, way of estimating collection size and rates of processing.

Houghton Library User Experience Survey

- A user survey developed by Houghton centered on the Reading Room experience. Emphasizes both focused work and broad exploration as key to the research process; and how collections, staff, and space are key to that endeavor.

Communication

Maier, Shannon Bowen. 2011. "MPLP and the Catalog Record as a Finding Aid." *Journal of Archival Organization*, 9:1, 32-44, DOI: 10.1080/15332748.2011.577652.

Peterson, Christie. "Access Restrictions that Promote Access." Chaos -> Order blog. November 5, 2015.

Santamaria, Daniel A. *Extensible Processing for Archives and Special Collections*. Chicago: Neal-Shuman, 2015.

- Page 121 - 152, "Public Services and User Needs". Short, but touches on many key issues.

Theimer, Kate (editor). *Reference and access: innovative practices for archives and special collections*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2014.

- First chapter of particular relevance: "Building bridges: closing the divide between minimally processed collections and researchers. " Authored by Emily Christopherson and Rachel Dreyer of the American Heritage Center.

Yakel, Elizabeth. "Thinking inside and outside the Boxes: Archival Reference Services at the Turn of the Century." 2000. *Archivaria*. 49. 140-160.

- Yakel's examination of reference services as knowledge management provides a broader context within which one can consider communicating more information with less description.

JOINT PROCESSING TOOLKITS

Accessioning

Processing

Assessment

APPENDIX

JPGWG Charge

JPGWG Agendas and Meeting Minutes

Personas

Report on Current Practices

Survey

GLOSSARY

Archivist. An individual responsible for appraising, acquiring, arranging, describing, preserving, and providing access to records of enduring value, according to the principles of provenance, original order, and collective control to protect the materials' authenticity and context. In these guidelines we use “archivist” to mean an individual who works with special collections material, no matter their actual job title.

Department. The term used in these guidelines to describe a subdivision of a repository. A repository could consist of a single department (which can the repository itself) or multiple departments, which may consist of different functions within the repository (e.g., curatorial, public services, processing, etc.)

Repository. Used throughout these guidelines to refer to a library, museum, or record office undertaking stewardship of archives or special collections. Materials can be in any form including manuscripts, photographs, moving image and sound materials, and their electronic equivalents.

Research Community. For the purposes of these guidelines, a research community is the broader term for all of the individuals who use the collections and services of a repository.

Staff. A group of individuals responsible for the internal operations of a repository. For the purposes of these guidelines, staff may be referred to by functions including processing, acquisition, curatorial, and public services. In some cases the more general “staff” refers to members of a department. Staff can be categorized as professionals, paraprofessionals, or hourly.

User. A generic term for an individual who uses the collections and services of a repository. Patron, reader, and researcher, are other words often used to connote a user who is not a member of the repository staff.