



# Efficient Processing for Backlog Reduction: Applied Minimal Processing Strategies

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# Exposing Hidden Collections

- “More Product, Less Process”
  - Purpose
  - Findings

# MPLP Recommendations

- Arrangement at series level or higher
- Not all series/files are equal
- Context/content in minimum words
- Description reflects arrangement
- Stop basic preservation activities
- Make unprocessed holdings discoverable/accessible

# MPLP Factors

- Levels of Control
- Preservation
- Access

# Strategies at Other Institutions

- Beinecke Library, Yale: Baseline Project
  - Internally funded.
  - ~13,000 linear feet to be minimally processed between 2009-2014.
  - Established acceptable “baseline” for discoverability, physical control for offsite storage.
  - “Traditional” processing of manuscripts suspended during project.
  - All new acquisitions “baselined” during accessioning.
  - Project was re-configured halfway through, 4 new support staff hired to meet deadline.

# Strategies at Other Institutions

- Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries (PACSCCL)
  - Funded by CLIR (Mellon)
  - Two rounds: 2009-11; 2013-14
  - Follow-up to Consortial Survey Project
  - Hired 5-10 team members
  - ~200 collections processed, many minimally
  - Sacrificing description for speed
  - <http://clir.pacscl.org/about-the-project/>

# Strategies at Other Institutions

- UCLA Department of Special Collections
  - Funded through donations, grants, foundation, reallocation.
  - Established Center for Primary Research and Training (CPRT) to train grad students in archival processing.
  - Created processing plans on accession, cost projections & supplies needed - asked donors for funds.
  - Cataloged old acquisitions, Ret. Con. Finding aids, leveraged digitization efforts to create access.



# Strategies at Other Institutions

- Whitman College, Washington
  - Colleen McFarland, lone arranger perspective
  - NHPRC minimal processing grant
  - NW Digital Archives consortia - Northwest Archives Processing Initiative
  - 8 institutions
  - Hired processing assistant



# Brainstorming

- What are some positive and negative consequences of this approach?
- What are you willing to give up to accomplish your goal?

# Define Your Objectives

- Survey scope and extent of your backlog.
  - How many boxes / linear feet?
  - How many different collections?
  - Urgent preservation issues?
  - Highly complex collections?
  - Other issues?

# Define Your Objectives

- What is an acceptable minimum?
  - Arrangement
  - Description
  - Preservation
  - Needs of researchers & public services.
- What are you willing to NOT do?

# Accessioning

- 1st line of defense against “backlog.”
- All new acquisitions receive “minimal” arrangement, description, preservation.

# Processing Plans

- Survey and document the state of the collection before processing.
  - How many accessions? Provenance?
  - Extent, formats, preservation issues?
  - Restrictions on access or use?
  - Original Order?
  - Existing descriptions?

# Processing Plans

- Document decisions you make about processing.
  - Arrangement actions – if any.
  - Identify series.
  - Descriptive tools to be created or improved.
  - Preservation actions taken or put off.
  - Appraisal and disposition decisions.
  - Other decisions and notes.

# Processing Plans

- Record any revisions to the plan as they come up.
- Keep the Processing Plan in the collection file as a permanent record.

# Enlist Help

- Students, interns, assistants & volunteers
  - Survey backlog and individual collections.
  - Rehousing, arrangement, listing, labeling.
- One man's help is another man's hindrance.



# Documentation

- Mandatory.
- Helps you stick to decisions, or change them when need arises.
- Helps you communicate with other stakeholders & future custodians.

# Perfection

- It doesn't exist. Let it go.
- Work with your public services counterparts (if they exist) to balance the needs of your researchers against the management of the collections.
- Revise the plan if it isn't working.



# Discussion & Questions

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