**Shelby White and Leon Levy Archives Center**

**Collections Management Guide: Arrangement and Description**

**Last Edit:** 3 August 2022

**Introduction to Arrangement and Description**

The Archives Center regards arrangement and description, frequently referred to as processing, as a crucial part of the ecosystem of ethical archival stewardship. Arrangement and description provides users access points to discover and access materials. Even more, this work affords archivists with the information required to sustain and manage collections. We define arrangement and description as all of the iterative labor required for an archivist to properly prepare archival materials for use. A processing archivist:

**·**  surveys archival collections and records to determine the provenance, contents, condition, order, and research value of materials;

**·**  evaluates the costs required to arrange and describe material in relation to the determined value;

**·**  creates a project plan to document the outcome of archival surveys and decision making and to outline the archivists’ interventions;

**·**  establishes the arrangement of the collection (either by preserving and documenting the original order or by re-arranging and documenting the new order imposed by the archivist);

**·** and generates an archival finding aid (frequently referred to as a resource record or generally as description) that conforms to local and national best practices.

The labor entailed within each step of the workflow is continuously shifting in response to the individual needs of our users and of the archives. User expectations increasingly grow to anticipate changes in the way historical documentation is created and delivered. Processing archivists reciprocate by adapting arrangement and description workflows to support more immediate and in-depth access for archival materials for users and archivists.

These guidelines document the development of these workflows and aim to make this labor transparent for future users and workers.[1]

**Required Tools and Access Points**

The Archives Center makes use of specialized software and databases to support and streamline the arrangement and description process. Processing archivists require access to the following:

**·** **ArchivesSpace (required):** This software is a digital collection management system that can be accessed via website at [www.archives.ias.edu/staff](http://www.archives.ias.edu/staff). First-time users will require a log-in and password.

**· ArchiveIT (optional, required for web-based content):** This software is used to capture and preserve web-based materials. Access is required for key information required to describe and provide access to web-based acquisitions. The system can be accessed via website, but first-time users will require a log-in and password.

**·** **Preservica (optional, required for born-digital content):** This software is used to ingest and preserve born-digital content. Access is required for key information required to describe and access born-digital materials. The system can be accessed via website, but first-time users will require a log-in and password.

In addition to digital tools for creating archival resource records, processing archivists will require access to key resources for identifying archival materials, noting preservation needs, and creating extensible records that conform to local and national standards for best practice. Additional resources include:

**·**  **Describing Archives: A Content Standard (required):** The Society of American Archivists maintains this set of national best-practices for the arrangement and description of archival materials. The standard can be accessed online at:<https://saa-ts-dacs.github.io/>.

**· International Standard for Archival Description (optional):** The International Council of Archives (ICA) maintains this set of international best-practices for the arrangement and description of archival materials. The standard can be accessed online at:<https://www.ica.org/en/isadg-general-international-standard-archival-description-second-edition>.

**· Authorized Linked Data Service (required):** The Library of Congress Linked Data Service is the preferred online database to support the creation of *authorized*, linkable agent and subject data for archival records. This database can be accessed online at: [www.id.loc.gov](http://www.id.loc.gov). Where no suitable Library of Congress authorities exist, archivists may additionally create authorities using the Virtual International Authority Files (VIAF) database at: [www.viaf.org](http://www.viaf.org). Alternately, archvists may consult archives specific authority database like Social Networks and Archival Context (SNAC) at: [www.snaccooperative.org](http://www.snaccooperative.org).

**· Wikidata Linked Data Service (optional):** This online database supports the creation of linkable agent and subject data for archival records. Note that while Wikidata is not considered an “authorized” source by national best practices, its vast controlled vocabulary can be linked to authorized sources and to wiki-content to significantly expand accessibility of archival records. This database can be accessed online at: [www.wikidata.org](http://www.wikidata.org).

**· Collection Identification Guide:** This guide created by the Preservation Self-Assessment Program allows archivist a variety of tools to identify and preserve analog and audiovisual media types. This guide can be accessed at:<https://psap.library.illinois.edu/collection-id-guide>.

**· PREMIS Data Dictionary for Preservation Metadata:** The PREMIS Data Dictionary is the international standard to support the preservation of digital archival materials. This guide can be accessed at:<https://www.loc.gov/standards/premis/v3/premis-3-0-final.pdf>.

**· Housing and Material Specifications Guide:** This guidance from the National Archives provides guidance for archivists on how to stabilize and address preservation storage needs for archival materials. The guidelines can be accessed at:<https://www.archives.gov/preservation/storage/specs-housing-exhibition-2015-current.html>.

· **Archival Supplies and Containers:** Archival supplies are available in the HS-LIB 0005 and in the Archives Center Reading Room for general use. Specialized supplies can also be ordered on demand.

**Arrangement and Description Workflows: Collection Survey and Analysis**

Archivists begin the work of arrangement and description with a detailed survey of the archival collection in its entirety. The collection survey begins with an archivist identifying all administrative records related to the acquisition, accession, and maintenance of the collection to the present day.

This workflow begins with a review of the *collection* *folder* (sometimes called *control folder*). This folder may be electronic or analog, but either way it should contain all of the documentation the archives maintains about the material’s acquisition, accession, preservation, and maintenance of the collection. Frequently, these folders contain correspondence with the source/creator of the collection, legal documentation of the acquisition, accession records for the first donation and any subsequent additions, inventories of the collection contents, and condition/preservation assessments of the materials.

After consulting the collection folder, the processing archivist should additionally consult the Archives Center’s collection management software. The archivist should review all relevant records in ArchivesSpace concerning the collection, including resource records, accession records, digital object records, and location records.

Finally, once the archivist acquires the location information for the collection and any additions, they can begin a review of the physical contents of the collection. As the archivist reviews the documentation and surveys materials, they will ensure that they have the relevant information needed to create a comprehensive processing plan. The information in the survey checklist below provides a general guideline for the kinds of information that archivists will need to do so.

**Arrangement and Description Worksheet: Quick Guide to Collection Survey and Analysis**

***Collection Creation***

* Which person or group of people is responsible for the creation/accumulation of these materials?
* In what context did that person or group collect these materials? (Did that person collect materials over the course of their personal life? over the course of their employment? alongside their family or kinfolk?)
* Is the person that created the materials the same person that donated the materials? If not, how did the donor come into possession of these materials?
* Is there a single donation of materials or were there multiple donations? If multiple, does the archives documentation accurately reflect all donations?
* Is there anything we do not know about the collection’s creation, ownership, and transfer to the archive?

***Collection Contents***

* What is the total size of the collection?
* What formats are included among the collection contents? Is there born-digital, web content, or audiovisual materials that require additional consideration processing workflows?
* Are there any preservation or condition concerns in the collection?
* Are there any materials that contain sensitive or restricted contents?
* What dates does the material cover? What significant individuals or subjects?

***Collection Arrangement and Existing Description***

* + Does the collection have an *existing or original order*? If, so is the existing order sufficient to provide users with access to the collection?
  + Are there any existing inventories or navigational tools to help users navigate the collection? If so, are these tools accurate?
  + What is the current level of accessibility (or *level of control*) for the collection? Can a user request the collection as a whole, individual series/sub-groups, individual boxes, individual folders, and/or individual items?
  + Are there any digitized surrogates that provide digital access to the collection contents?

**Arrangement and Description Workflows: Evaluating the Time and Costs of Stewardship**

After completing a detailed survey and analysis of the collection’s context of creation, contents, and condition, the processing archivist will need to complete one final evaluation before composing a final recommendation for the collection’s arrangement and description. This final step consists of an evaluation of the total time and costs affiliated with the work to be proposed in the processing plan.

As the OCLC’s *Total Costs of Stewardship: Responsible Collection Building in Archives and Special Collections* report explains, “A key to making informed collection development, appraisal, and collection management decisions is a strong understanding of the necessary institutional resources and capacity for the work to preserve, describe, store, and make accessible collection materials. But in many institutions, those tasked with building collections are separate from those tasked with the ongoing stewardship work of collections. Because of this operational divide, institutions may lack clear, timely, and actionable information on the institution’s capacity to care for its collections, making a holistic approach to acquisition, appraisal, and stewardship decisions especially challenging.” The final evaluation of the costs of stewardship helps to bridge this gap by asking all archivists that participate in collection maintenance to consider how the costs associated with a single collection can comprise or affect the capacity of the Archives Center to care for the collections as a whole.

After the survey and analysis of the collection, the archivist can make informed decisions about how to arrange and describe material at a level that increases the collection’s accessibility to users responsibly (i.e., without draining the institutional capacity). One way that archivists can frame this work is by considering the life cycle of the collection. Ideally, archival collections outlive their stewards; responsible stewards recognize that there will be generations of archivists that continually provide additional care to extend the accessibility of the collection over the course of its lifecycle. Responsible archivists understand that arrangement and description is an iterative process: a single collection will likely be arranged and described multiple times over generations as user expectations and collection maintenance expectations change.

In order to facilitate iterative (or extensible) arrangement and description, many archivists choose to describe arrangement and description projects based on a framework that acknowledge progressive levels of stewardship. The “levels” in the framework represent the collection’s accessibility by isolating progressively smaller parts of the collection to determine if those intellectual or physical of its hierarchy are arranged, described, and available to researchers. These levels generally include:

* The “collection-level” (e.g., the collection as a whole is described and users can request the entire collection but not individual boxes, folders, or items);
* the “series-level” (e.g., the collection has individual series or sub-groups that are described and that users can request as a single series of the collection);
* the “container-level” (e.g., the collection’s individual containers are described and users can request a single box in a series or collection);
* the “folder-level” (e.g, the collection’s folders are described and users can request an individual folder in a container, series, or collection);
* or the “item-level” (e.g., each individual item is described and users can request the a given item in a folder, box, series, or collection)

Each level of accessibility requires an increasing amount of labor for archivists arranging and describing collections and is therefore more expensive in terms of labor associated costs. In order for archivists to evaluate costs effectively, our institution maintains the below guidelines to help determine the costs of labor and supplies associated with each level.

**Quick Guide to Arrangement and Description Labor Based on Level of Accessibility**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Accessibility Level | Arrangement Labor | Description Labor |
| Collection-level | Archivists leave the collection in its existing order/arrangement. If the collection is not housed in archival containers, archivists will rehouse materials and check for preservation concerns, but will not re-house individual folders. Archivists will move labeled storage containers to storage for later work. | Archivists will create a resource record in ArchivesSpace that conforms to DACS’ single-level minimum for archival description. Archivists will additionally conduct a general survey of the collection to identify any special formats (e.g., audiovisual materials, born digital materials, three-dimensional artifacts) and record any access or use restrictions that may apply based on format or collection contents. |
| Series-level | Archivists will put the collection into a rough order based on intellectual groupings. If the collection is not housed in archival containers, archivists will rehouse materials and check for preservation concerns. Archivists will place loose materials into folders and remove any binders, hanging file folders, or frames that prevent proper long-term storage. | Archivists will create a resource record in ArchivesSpace that conforms to DACS’ single-level minimum for archival description and includes identified series. Archivists will create scope and content notes for each series and/or sub-series that describe the contents and add an arrangement note to the collection-level finding aid.  Archivists will create a collection inventory that identifies which containers include content for each series. Archivists will additionally note the presence of any restricted content and/or special formats. |
| File-level | Put series and folders or volumes in order within boxes. Do not order or arrange material within folders. If arrives unfoldered: Items identified, roughly sorted and placed into folders. Materials rehoused into archival boxes; refoldering into archival folders only if originals are damaged or do not fit; Check for mold, pests and nitrate film. | Collection Level Record and finding aid with folder list. |
| Item-level | Materials rehoused into archival boxes, items refoldered into archival folders. Individual items arranged within folders or individually foldered. | Collection Level record and detailed finding aid with a container list that lists individual items. |

**Quick Guide to Calculating Time**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Accessibility Level | Estimated Time (Per Linear Foot) |
| Collection-level | 1-2 hours per linear foot |
| Series-level | 2-5 hours per linear foot |
| File-level (Original Order) | 6-12 hours per linear foot |
| File-level (Imposed Order) | 15-20 hours per linear foot |
| Item-level | 25-40 hours per linear foot |

**Quick Guide to Calculating Costs**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Accessibility Level | Labor Costs | Supply Costs | Average Total Cost |
| Collection-level | $26-$80 | $8.45 | $61.45 |
| Series-level | $52-$200 | $16.87 | $142.87 |
| File-level (Original Order) | $156-$456 | $23.14 | $329.14 |
| File-level (Imposed Order) | $390-$760 | $23.14 | $403.14 |
| Item-level | $650-$1520 | $45.50 | $1130.50 |

**Arrangement and Description Workflows: Creating a Project Plan for Arrangement and Description**

Before arrangement and description work can begin, archivists will create a Project Plan to outline the proposed plan for arrangement and description. The Project Plan is a critical step in the workflow as it is the only point in which outside archivists can review and offer feedback on the proposed course of action. This step promotes collaboration and accountability in the stewardship of the record. Additionally, the completed project plan becomes a helpful tool for the archivist to outline the course of their work and document archival interventions for future archivists and users alike.

The Project Plan records all of the work completed in the collection survey and analysis as well as the evaluation of labor costs. All plans will follow the same format as adapted from the OCLC’s Total Cost of Stewardship report.

**Arrangement and Description Worksheet: Project Plan for Arrangement and Description**

**PROJECT PLAN**

**Created by: Date:**

**COLLECTION OVERVIEW**

**Collection Title:**

**Collection Identifier:**

**Accession Identifier(s):**

**Creator: Source:**

**Office of Origin (if applicable):**

**Inclusive Dates:**

**Extent:**

**COLLECTION SURVEY + ANALYSIS**

**Abstract**

*Create a brief overview of the collection’s context and contents. Include relevant information about the creator as well as the context of creation (i.e., what actions or activities the collection documents). Also include a high-level description of the materials in the collection, including general information about the types of materials included. Try to be brief (no more than 250 words).*

**Custodial History**

*Describe the chain of custody for the materials, including information regarding collection ownership, storage, and/or any interventions involved in the collection in its current state. Identify if the collection came in one accession or multiple additions/accruals.*

**Arrangement**

*Detail the existing arrangement of the collection. Explain if the collection’s original order remains intact and/or any interventions to the order that have been imposed prior. If no order exists, note that as well.*

**Format Needs**

*Identify any specialized formats present in the collection. Include information about audiovisual materials, born-digital materials, or three-dimensional artifacts that may require specialized storage and/or condition assessments.*

**Condition Assessment**

*Provide relevant details regarding the condition of the collection. Include any major preservation concerns (e.g., water damage, pest infestation, and/or active mold.) Identify if the collection requires re-housing and detail any supplies that will be needed to stabilize the collection’s condition prior to long-term storage.*

**Rights and Restrictions**

*Identify if collection contains any protected contents (i.e., student records protected under FERPA or health records protected under HIPAA); any sensitive contents (e.g., personal identifying information, financial records, or culturally sensitive materials); and/or any materials that have been restricted per the terms of the deed of gift or acquisition. Identify if there is any information about the copyright for the collection contents and/or any relevant information about the intellectual property as a whole.*

**PROPOSED PLAN OF ACTION**

**Proposed Accessibility Level for Arrangement and Description:**

**Estimated Hours of Labor:**

**Estimated Costs:**

**Proposed Arrangement**

*If the archivist plans to impose a new arrangement on the collection, provide a detailed outlined of the new arrangement including titles, dates, and extents for each series/sub-series. For folder-level or item-level accessibility, be sure to provide a brief justification of the chosen approach. If the arrangement will remain as is, no justification is needed.*

**Proposed Housing and Stabilization Work**

*Provide a brief overview of any physical rehousing and/or arrangement required to complete the project. Include an estimate of the required supplies needed to complete that work, being sure to include any specialized supplies that will be required (e.g., cassette boxes, oversized boxes, etc.).*

**Proposed Weeding and Appraisal**

*If the collection contains excessive duplicates, sensitive materials, and/or non-archival materials that should be removed from the collection during processing, indicate what those materials are and provide an appropriate course of action (e.g., duplicates should be removed and recycled, sensitive materials should be removed and reviewed by donor, etc.).*

**Proposed Work for Specialized Formats**

*If the collection contains audiovisual or born-digital materials that require specialized housing or transfer to special storage environments, outline a course of action for that work here.*

**Proposed Preservation/Conservation Work**

*If the collection requires preservation or conservation, indicate the needs and a proposed course of action. Note that preservation and conservation will exclude preventative or “holdings maintenance” work and focus instead on major interventions (e.g., de-acidification, repair, encapsulation, etc.).*

**Proposed Timeline**

*Provide an overview of the actions you will take in order.* *Include any milestones or deliverables that can be shared with relevant stakeholders or community members.*

**Arrangement and Description Workflows: Establishing an Arrangement**

After completing the project plan, the archivist should be ready to physically establish the collection’s arrangement as proposed. Archivists that propose the collection remain in its original order will only need to record the collection’s current arrangement using an [ArchivesSpace compatible inventory template](https://github.com/archivesspace/archivesspace/blob/master/templates/bulk_import_template.xlsx). On the other hand, archivists that propose imposing an outside arrangement will need to first identify the intellectual organization of the collection and optionally physically rearrange the collection before recording the new arrangement via the [ArchivesSpace compatible inventory template](https://github.com/archivesspace/archivesspace/blob/master/templates/bulk_import_template.xlsx).

A general rule of experienced archival arrangers is to intervene in a collection’s original order as little as possible (this rule is as a core principle of archival processing frequently referred to by theorists using the term *respect des fonds*). Even in cases where archivists must impose an order to make a collection intelligible as a unit, experienced archivists often recommend that archivists re-arranging material only work at one level of accessibility at a time. Unexperienced archivist often attempt to bring a collection from collection-level accessibility all the way to item-level accessibility in one round of processing, but this is often regarded as an ineffective strategy. Instead, a general rule is to work across one level of intellectual unit at a time (e.g., from collection-level to series-level, series-level to folder-level, folder-level to item-level) in iterative processing projects that take place over several years.

*Collection-Level Arrangements.* All materials that enter this repository are minimally managed at the collection-level. A collection-level arrangement groups all materials within the archive that share a distinct provenance (and/or creator) into a single access point for users via a collection-level finding aid. Collections include all accessions or accruals of materials with the same provenance and belonging to the same body of documentation (i.e., the same group of records, the same fonds, etc.).

The materials within the collection will all receive a shared “collection number” or “identifier” to mark them as part of a single unit. Individual accession records will not be deleted or destroyed, but the materials within those accessions will be incorporated and described together as one unit in the finding aid. At this level, physical control is maintained by giving each new box of materials a sequential box number that represents its place in the total collection.

If a collection’s creator and/or donor provides an inventory, that inventory will be used as the basis to access the collection in its original order and reproduced in the collection’s finding aid. If no inventory exists, users will need to rely on box numbers in the finding aids container listing to navigate the collection. For this reason, this level of arrangement will be ideal for small collections (for which users might just request the entire collection easily), unprocessed collections with multiple accruals, and collections with low use.

*Series-Level Arrangements.* For collections, or parts of collections, which require a more detailed level of control for retrieval and use, archivists may choose to impose a series-level arrangement. The SAA defines a series as, “A group of similar records that are arranged according to a filing system and that are related as the result of being created, received, or used in the same activity.”46 Series are intellectual groupings that archivists use to arrange materials according to their creation, use, function, and, often, format.

Often in our repository, the series-level of arrangement will be seen in use for processed collections that contain unprocessed additions or accruals. Rather than re-filing all new materials immediately into highly processed and arranged collections, all accruals will first be placed in an “Additions” series by the Accessioning Archivist. This ensures that users can access materials, reference staff can retrieve materials, and that Collection Services team members can prioritize when new materials are filed in an efficient way.

In the finding aid, all series will appear in the container listing and in an arrangement note for users. Individual series will include scope and content notes that explain to users how archivists have intervened in the arrangement of materials and each series will be linked to the physical containers that include parts of the series to aid retrieval.

Materials in a series may appear to be either intellectually arranged (meaning that they are only identified intellectually in a finding aid as being part of the group) or both intellectually and physically arranged (meaning that they are both intellectually identified as a group and physically rehoused to be in the same containers). Both methods are acceptable, though intellectual arrangement is preferable because it requires less effort for a similar effect.

New archivists sometimes struggle when first learning to create series; however, experienced archivists often have a clearer sense of the kinds of distinctions which make for successful series. The most successful series often divide collections along the lines of provenance and function rather than thematic subjects. A successful series level arrangement will allow for the easy addition of accruals or additions into a collection. Series that define material by provenance allow archivists to easily add materials from later additions into pre-existing arrangements (e.g., in a collection of organizational records it should be easy to place materials created by the Marketing Department into one series and materials created by the Education Department into another).

Series that divide materials along subject lines are often problematic for later accruals (e.g., if the organization’s records are instead arranged by the subjects of “Educational Materials” and “Publications,” archivists might have trouble incorporating a magazine created by the marketing department to advertise to educational services into

the collection because technically it fits under the subjects of both series). For this reason, all series-level arrangements are first proposed in the processing plan and then approved by a group of reviewers before implementation.

For any archivists struggling with series creation, the following list of common series titles provides some frequently used examples to consider:

• Articles,

• Administrative records,

• Audiovisual materials,

• Awards,

• Business records,

• Conference records,

• Correspondence,

• Faculty files,

• Financial reports,

• Legal records,

• Meeting minutes,

• Personal papers,

• Personnel files,

• Photographs,

• Publications,

• Research,

• Subject files, and

• Writing.

*Subseries-Level Arrangements.* Series may contain sub-series which impose further distinctions on materials already arranged into subseries. This additional level of arrangement is often only necessary for the largest and most complex of organizational records and should not be a regularly or excessively used arrangement strategy in this repository (except in the cases of the largest collections including university archives and United Mine Workers, for example).

*File-Level Arrangements*. While most collections will be served adequately using series-level arrangements, some collections with high use, sensitive topics, or detailed donor inventories may be arranged at the file-level. Collections may be arranged directly at the file-level or may be placed first into a series order and then arranged individually by files.

A file level order requires that all files have meaningful and useful titles. Whenever possible, archivists should retain the file titles included by the collection’s creator. However, if creator provided titles are incorrect, misleading, or non-existent, archivists will be required to title folders before providing an arrangement or order for all folders to appear.

When titling folders, archivists should provide titles that detail the creator, function, format, and frequency of the materials within. Folder titles should include inclusive dates that provide key information about the range of dates when the material within the folder was created. Once all folders are titled, archivists should arrange folders in a schema that can be easily described to users in a finding aid and easily maintained if several new accruals of material appear in the collection. For example, archivists may consider arranging folders alphabetically, chronologically, or in their original order.

Collections arranged at the file-level require archivists create a container listing of all files and their corresponding boxes for users in the finding aid. Archivists that use this arrangement will need to complete an arrangement note that describes to users how the materials have been arranged as well as information about any files that have been re-titled in a processing note to make this intervention clear to users.

*Item-Level Arrangements.* In extremely rare cases, archivists may need to arrange collections at the item-level. In this level, individual items (usually within folders) will receive a title and be arranged according a schema of the archivist’s choice. This level of arrangement will be extremely laborious and will require the archivists to title individual items within a collection. Because of the intensive labor associated with this level of arrangement, this level will very rarely be used across entire collections within this repository.

Item titles should often be derived straight from the item itself, but, in cases where no existing title is provided, archivists will have to create titles. Item titles, like folder titles, should include key details about the creator, function, and format of the item, as well as the date of creation. A successful item title may be “Annual Report from the Offices of Human Services, 1957.” Notice that this includes the creator, format, and date for the material. This helps to give the user a clear sense of the context.

Collections arranged at the item-level will require archivists to include a list of item titles in a container listing for the finding aid. Archivists will need to include key information about where they have intervened on individual titles in the processing information note, and include arrangement notes that describe how items are arranged either uniformly across the collection or within each individual file or series grouping. Again, the high intensity of the arrangement requires a matching level of commitment for archivists when physically processing and describing the collection. This intense level of labor means that it will often be not only unnecessary to process collections in this detail but undesirable as well.

**Arrangement and Description Workflows: Generating a Finding Aid**

After finalizing the collection’s arrangement, archivists finalize their work by completing the collection’s description. Archival description acts as an important access tool for users navigating the collection. The description itself is often conflated with the finding aid or resource record. However, it’s important for archivists to recognize the difference.

Archival description is simply that: text that an archivist creates to describe a collection. Description can be saved as documentation in a word document, a pdf, or even just a typed/manuscript note saved in a collection file. In order to make archival description convenient and accessible for our users, archivists standardize description using best practices (DACS and/or ISAD-G), so that archival description across multiple repositories looks similar and users know generally how to interact with it. Additionally, archivists compile our description into standardized tools, “finding aids,” which are often made available digitally to help users navigate collections from afar. Finally, archivists often create and maintain our finding aids in a specialized encoded format (Encoded Archival Description or EAD) that allows archives to aggregate and preserve collection description in mass.

During processing, the archivist will use the collection management software (ArchivesSpace) to create a resource record that can be automatically exported as an EAD file for aggregation and preservation by collection stewards. Using ArchivesSpace, the archivist can publish their resource record to the web where it will appear as one of many finding aids in our digital database for users to browse, search, and request materials from afar.

The following rules ensure the consistency and usability of this resource record as data. It is crucial for archivists to use the below charts to record data for each sub-record or part of the resource record, so that both users and future archivists can leverage their efforts for years to come.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Resource Record: Basic Information Sub-record** | |
| **Field** | **Local Rules for Data Entry** |
| **Title\*** | Record the DACS-compliant title for the collection. All titles should include a name segment and unit type as described in DACS 2.3. |
| **Identifier\*** | Assign a unique identifier to the collection that conforms to local standards. All collection identifiers should indicate the sequential number of the collection in five digits (e.g., 00123, 00124, etc.). |
| **Level of Description** | Enter “Collection” for special collections (e.g., personal or family papers) and “Record Group” for institutional records. |
| **Resource Type** | The resource type field is a drop-down menu where users can record the *DACS* compliant title unit for the collection. Materials can either be part of a collection, papers, records, or group of publications. Note that collections, records, and papers unit types can include publications. Therefore, the designation for publications should only be used if a given acquisition consists solely of published materials. |
| **Publish** | Leave unchecked. |
| **Restrictions Apply?\*** | Check box to indicate that any of the materials in this collection will be restricted. |
| **Repository Processing Note** | Optionally record any notes regarding the arrangement or description of the collection which should be visible only to staff. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Resource Record: Languages Sub-record** | |
| **Field** | Local Rules for Data Entry |
| **Language\*** | Record the languages represented by the materials. |
| **Script\*** | Record the scripts represented by the materials. (For English, indicate Latin.) |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Resource Record: Dates Sub-record** | |
| **Field** | **Local Rules for Data Entry** |
| **Label\*** | Select “Creation” to record *inclusive dates* for the collection as a whole. |
| **Expression\*** | Record the natural expression of the dates, spelling out any dates along with any additional descriptive information (i.e., “circa April 1950 - August 1960,” etc.). Alternatively, if no dates are available document that the material is “undated.” |
| **Type\*** | Select the type of dates being recorded from the following list of options: inclusive, bulk, or single. Note: *DACS* requires records to include inclusive dates, but bulk dates are optional. |
| **Begin\*** | Note the beginning date using the following any of the formats: YYYY, YYYY-MM, YYYY-MM-DD. |
| **End\*** | Note the ending date using the following any of the formats: YYYY, YYYY-MM, YYYY-MM-DD. |
| **Certainty, Era, and Calendar** | Optional. Unless applicable, leave blank. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Resource Record: Extents Sub-record** | |
| **Field** | **Local Rules for Data Entry** |
| **Portion\*** | Specify whether the recorded measures document the “whole” collection or “part” of the collection. Note: a measurement of the whole is required. Measurements of specific parts are only required when mixed media collections contain audiovisual or born-digital contents. |
| **Number\*** | Note the “number” of materials for the measurement (e.g., the quantity of either linear feet, folders, items (audiovisual) or gigabytes (digital). For a collection that measures 1.5 linear feet, enter “1.5.” For a collection containing 6 GB, enter “6” |
| **Type\*** | Record the unit of measure for the collection. Generally, whole acquisitions containing a significant amount of mixed media should be measured in linear feet. Digital files should be measured in either gigabytes, megabytes or terabytes. Audiovisual collections should be measured in items. |
| **Container Summary\*** | Note the type of containers used to house this collection (e.g., “Housed in 50 record storage containers.”) |
| **Physical Details\*** | Born digital and audiovisual extent types will optionally require additional information. Any of the following extent types require the archivist to include more specific information in the physical details: For Audiotapes, specify if open reel. For Audiocassettes, specify the cartridge format (i.e., 8-Track, DAT or Digital Audio Tape, Digital Compact Cassette, or Microcassette). For Cylinders, specify if wax or plastic. For Films, specify the element type (i.e., acetate, nitrate, or polyester). For Microform, specify if microfilm or microfiche. For Optical Media, specify if Compact Disk (CD), DVD, LaserDisc, or MiniDisc. For Sound Discs, specify if aluminum, lacquer, shellac, or vinyl disc. For Photographic Negatives, specify if glass or plastic. For Photographic Slides, specify if glass or plastic. For Photographic Prints, specify if cased prints exist (i.e., daguerreotypes, ambrotypes, and/or tintypes) and whether monochrome, color, or black and white. For Photomechanic Prints, specify mechanical process if known (i.e., lithograph, gravure, collotype, etc.).For Videocassettes, specify the cartridge format (i.e., Betacam, Betamax, D-2, D03, DVCAM, DVCPRO, MiniDV, U-Matic, VHS, or Video8). For Videotapes, specify if open reel. |
| **Dimensions** | For certain formats, still more information will be required about the physical dimensions of a given format. Specialized formats like film reels, open reels, and floppy disks will require dimensions in order to distinguish specific formats apart from one another. Whenever possible archivists should record the following dimensions for the following formats: For Audiotapes, specify if ¼”, ½”, 1”, or 2” reel. For Films, specify the gauge of the film or soundtrack in millimeters (i.e., 8mm, 9.5mm, 16mm, or 35mm). For 8mm film reels, specify whether single, standard, super, or Maurer. For Floppy Disks, specify whether 3.5”, 5.25”, or 8”. For Sound Discs, specify diameter in inches. For Videotapes, specify if ½”, 1”, or 2” reel. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Resource Record: Finding Aid Data Sub-record** | |
| **Field** | **Local Rules for Data Entry** |
| **EAD ID\*** | Enter the collection’s five-digit identifier. (This will also serve as the EAD Identifier for the collection.) |
| **EAD Location** | Leave blank. |
| **Finding Aid Title\*** | “Guide to the [Collection Title]”  Guide to the Patrick Geary Papers |
| **Finding Aid Subtitle** | Leave blank. |
| **Finding Aid Filing Title** | Copy and paste the collection’s title. |
| **Finding Aid Date\*** | Indicate the date the finding aid was completed in the following format: YYYY-MM-DD. |
| **Finding Aid Author\*** | Indicate the author of the finding aid as follows: “[First Name Last Name] composed this finding aid.” |
| **Description Rules\*** | Record the descriptive standards used to compose the description. |
| **Language of Description\*** | Record the languages used to compose the description. |
| **Script of Description\*** | Record the scripts used to compose the description. (For English, indicate Latin.) |
| **Language of Description Note\*** | Record a note to indicate the language and include the language code (e.g., “This finding aid is written in <language langcode="eng">English</language>”.) |
| **Sponsor, Edition, Series Statement** | Optional. Unless applicable, leave blank. |
| **Finding Aid Status\*** | Indicate “In Progress” or “Completed.” |
| **Finding Aid Note** | Optional. Unless otherwise required, leave blank. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Resource Record: Revision Statements Sub-record** | |
| **Field** | **Local Rules for Data Entry** |
| Revision Date\* | Indicate the date the finding aid was revised in the following format: YYYY-MM-DD. |
| Revision Description\* | Provide a brief statement of who revised the finding aid and what the revision entailed. For example, “Caitlin Rizzo revised this finding aid to include a scope and contents note.” |
| Publish | Leave unchecked. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Resource Record: Related Accessions Sub-record** | |
| **Field** | **Local Rules for Data Entry** |
| Related Resource Record\* | This repository regularly receives additions (or “accruals”) to existing archival record groups. If a collection consists of multiple accessions or additions, the archivists should relate the resource to each accession. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Resource Record: Agent Links Sub-record** | |
| **Field** | **Local Rules for Data Entry** |
| **Role\*** | Note the individual who is the creator, source of subject of the materials. All accessions will require a creator. Some accessions, especially transfers from either within the university or within large organizations, may additionally require information about a “source” to be included in a second entry to this sub-record. This added information helps track of individuals that often serve as the point of contact for materials created by the Institute. |
| **Relator\*** | Use the drop down to describe the relation of the agent they are describing to the materials. When recording the collection creator or collection source, use the default value “Donor.” |
| **Agents\*** | Begin typing the name of the agent or click browse to see if a local record already exists. If a record does exist for that creator, verify the agent name does in fact describe the same individual/organization and click the record to link the agent. If the agent does not exist, the archivist must create a new agent record. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Resource Record: Subjects Sub-record** | |
| **Field** | **Local Rules for Data Entry** |
| **Subjects\*** | Begin typing the name of the subject or click browse to see if a local record already exists. If a record does exist for that subject, the archivist must create a new subject record that conforms to an authorized subject heading. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Resource Record: Notes Sub-record** | |
| **Field** | Local Rules for Data Entry |
| **Persistent ID\*** | Leave blank. |
| **Label\*** | Leave blank. |
| **Type\*** | Indicate the type of note (i.e., the DACS element) that corresponds to the descriptive text. |
| **Publish\*** | Leave unchecked. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Resource Record: Descriptive Text for Commonly Used Note Types** | |
| **Note Type** | **Local Rules for Data Entry** |
| **Abstract** | Provide a brief overview of the collection. This field should contain no more than 250 words to describe the collection’s context of creation and contents. |
| **Arrangement** | *DACS* 3.2 offers this field to archivists to describe the current arrangement of the materials. An example is as follows:  “This collection is arranged into two series:  1. Correspondence  2. Meeting Minutes” |
| **Biographical/Historical** | Optionally, provide information about the person or group that created the materials, including any administrative or historical information about the accumulation and maintenance of the material being described. Be aware that biographical/historical elements should not aggrandize or valorize individual content creators and any language will be reviewed for culturally sensitive descriptive practices. |
| **Conditions Governing Access\*** | *DACS* 4.1 explains that this element can be used to record any restricted information contained in the collection as a result of the nature of the information itself. The information should be derived from either legal agreements, federal laws, or local mandates.  The most common examples in our repository are as follows:  No Restrictions: “This collection is open for research.”  IAS Local Policies: “Select materials in this collection are subject to the Institute for Advanced Study Archival Policy (1986). Restrictions have been indicated at the folder-level.  Per the Institute for Advanced Study Archival Policy, Institute records remain under restriction for 30 years from the date of the record’s creation. Additionally, all institutional records related to personnel (including human resources record and/or records related to recommendation and/or appointment to the Institute) remain restricted for the lifetime of both the creator and subject.” |
| **Conditions Governing Use\*** | *DACS* 4.4 specifies that this note type be used to record restrictions on reproduction related to copyright or intellectual property rights.  The Institute applies the following standard language for this note:  “Researchers are welcome to publish, reproduce, and use the Shelby White and Leon Levy Archives Center’s holdings in accordance with <a href="https://www.copyright.gov/">U.S. Copyright Law</a>. Under the <a href="https://www.copyright.gov/fair-use/index.html">Fair Use doctrine</a>, users may freely reproduce materials for personal research, teaching, and/or scholarship. Under the same doctrine, users may cite or publish selected passages and/or quotations for comment and criticism. In accordance to <a href="https://www.copyright.gov/">U.S. Copyright Law</a>, researchers seeking to reproduce and/or publish materials in the entirety and/or for commercial purposes will require the permission of the copyright holder.  The Institute for Advanced Study holds the copyright to materials generated by Institute employees over the course of their work for the Institute. Where the Institute for Advanced Study holds the copyright, researchers are free to reproduce materials for one-time, non-commercial purposes. For all other cases, researchers are responsible for contacting the Archives Center to request permission at: archives@ias.edu  For all materials for which the Institute is not the copyright holder, researchers that choose to pursue publication and/or reproduction are responsible for determining the individual who does hold the copyright and requesting permission directly from that individual. Researchers with questions regarding the reproduction or use of archival materials can contact the Archives Center to request help at: archives@ias.edu.” |
| **Custodial History\*** | *DACS* 5.1 recommends the custodial history element be used to described the chain of ownership (or custody) of the materials in cases where the materials were not transferred to the archive directly from the creator or office of origin. |
| **Immediate Source of Acquisition\*** | *DACS* 5.2 provides this element for archivist to record the provenance of the collection. At the Shelby White and Leon Levy Archives Center, these notes will always be formed as follows:  “[DONOR] [donated/transferred] these materials to the Shelby White and Leon Levy Archives Center on [DATE].” |
| **Processing Information\*** | Archivists use this note to practice “honest” or transparent descriptive practice. In this repository, we mandate this note to record all interventions made by archivists on collection. This includes decisions to impose arrangements, rehouse materials, and/or decisions made in the description process. |
| **Preferred Citation** | Leave blank. ArchivesSpace will automatically generate a citation. |
| **Scope and Contents\*** | *DACS* 3.1 advises archivist to use the scope and contents element to record any of the following: the context of the creation of the collection; the documentary forms within the collection; the dates of the materials; the subject matter to which the records pertain; any other information related to the gaps or silences (i.e., what is missing from the collection).  An example from our repository is as follows:  “The Armand Borel papers consist of the personal files of Institute for Advanced Study School of Mathematics Faculty Armand Borel. The materials document Borel's role as a Faculty of the Institute for Advanced Study, including in particular his participation in Faculty governance, Institute programs, and administration. Formats include meeting notes, minutes, and personal correspondence. The bulk of the materials date from 1957-1993.” |

**Arrangement and Description Workflows: Submitting Description for Review and Publication**

After saving all descriptive content to the ArchivesSpace resource record, the archivist will submit their finding aid for peer-review. The peer-review process promotes accountability among archivists and provides an opportunity for feedback and revision.

Once the finding aid is reviewed and any edits amended, the ArchivesSpace system administrator will publish the finding aid for public view completing the arrangement and description process. At this point, all that remains is for the archivist to file all of the documentation created during the arrangement and description workflow in the collection folder and optionally update the collection management record for the collection in ArchivesSpace.

[1] In order to ensure their relevancy, these guidelines are reviewed and revised bi-annually.