Florida State University Libraries
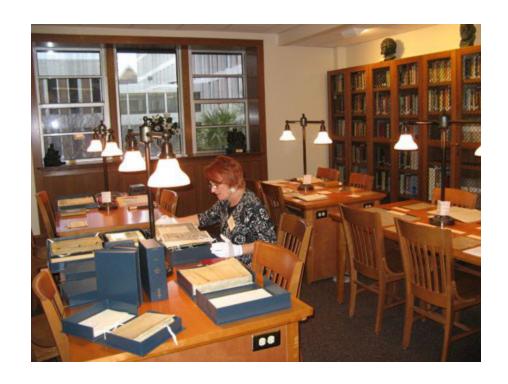
Faculty Publications

University Libraries

2011

Processing Archives in Special Collections

Burt Altman

PROCESSING ARCHIVES IN SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Burt Altman, CA

Special Collections

Sept. 12-13, 2011

Topics To Be Covered

- What is Archival Processing?
- What is a Finding Aid?
- Principles of Archival Description
- Accessioning
- Pre-Processing
- Surveying
- Processing Plan
- Arrangement and Description
- Using Archon to Create Finding Aids

Archival Processing

- Gathering and analyzing information about the collection

- Organizing and arranging the collection

- Creating finding aids to allow access to the collection

What Is a Finding Aid?

- Enables researchers to discover the nature and contents of a collection

- Two major parts:
    - Front Matter (overview of the collection)
    - Container List (detailed inventory – any level)

Principles of Archival Description

- Provenance

  - Ownership

  - Keeping records together by creator

  - Original context and use of records

- Original Order

  - Organization and sequence of records creator established

Accessioning Archival Materials

- Gaining initial control over a newly-purchased or donated collection

- Called "Accession" until processed

- Importance of Accessioning

"Pre-Processing"

- Inventorying
  - Creating Box Lists (if they don't exist)
  - Look for preservation needs, duplicates, missing materials, multimedia
- Rehousing (Preservation)
- Exercising "More Product, Less Process" (MPLP)

Survey and Processing Plan

- Review existing collection information

- Do research in other sources

- Study collection contents

- Determine processing plan (level of processing, how arranged/described)

Organization and Arrangement

- Divide into series and subseries, depending on collection

- Arrange files in a particular order (chrono, alpha), not usually folder contents

- Speak with archivist before beginning physical organization; record decision in processing plan

DESCRIPTION:
CREATING FINDING AIDS

- Archon is primary tool

- Utilizes Encoded Archival Description (EAD), but behind the scenes

- EAD encoding knowledge not required, but archival theory important

Examples of EAD Finding Aids

Additional Steps

- Creating Catalog Record (Metadata Cataloger)
- Creating Link to Finding Aid (PURL)
- Digitization Option

Resources

- Archon website: http://archon.org

- Test sites: http://fsuarchon-test.fcla.edu (contact Burt for logon)

  http://pelethemutt.com/SAA/313/Archon/ (contact Burt for logon)

- FLORIDA ARCHON "PRODUCTION" SITES:
  - FSU site: http://fsuarchon.fcla.edu
  - University of Florida: http://ufarchon.fcla.edu/
  - **Florida International University: http://fiuarchon.fcla.edu/
  - University of Central Florida: http://fiuarchon.fcla.edu/

Questions, Comments?