Extensible Processing

The Spectrum of Archival Intervention

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What Is Extensible Processing?*

- Create baseline level of access to ALL collections
- Follow the standards
- Create structured data
- Process iteratively
- Focus on the aggregate
- Prioritize policies over items

*Dan Santamaria: *Extensible Processing for Archives and Special Collections*.
Chicago: Neal-Schuman 2015

Prerequisite Policies

- Mission Statement that Prioritizes Access
- Collection Development
- Appraisal Guidelines
- Processing Guidelines
- Environmental Conditions

Processing Principles

- The term "processing" encompasses appraisal, description, arrangement, and preservation actions
- Processing should occur at a **defined level of detail**
- Appraisal, description, arrangement, and preservation work should occur at a **common level of detail**
- Processing levels should be **applied to all collected materials**
- Processing levels should be **applied to aggregates**
- Processing actions should be **applied top-down and iteratively**
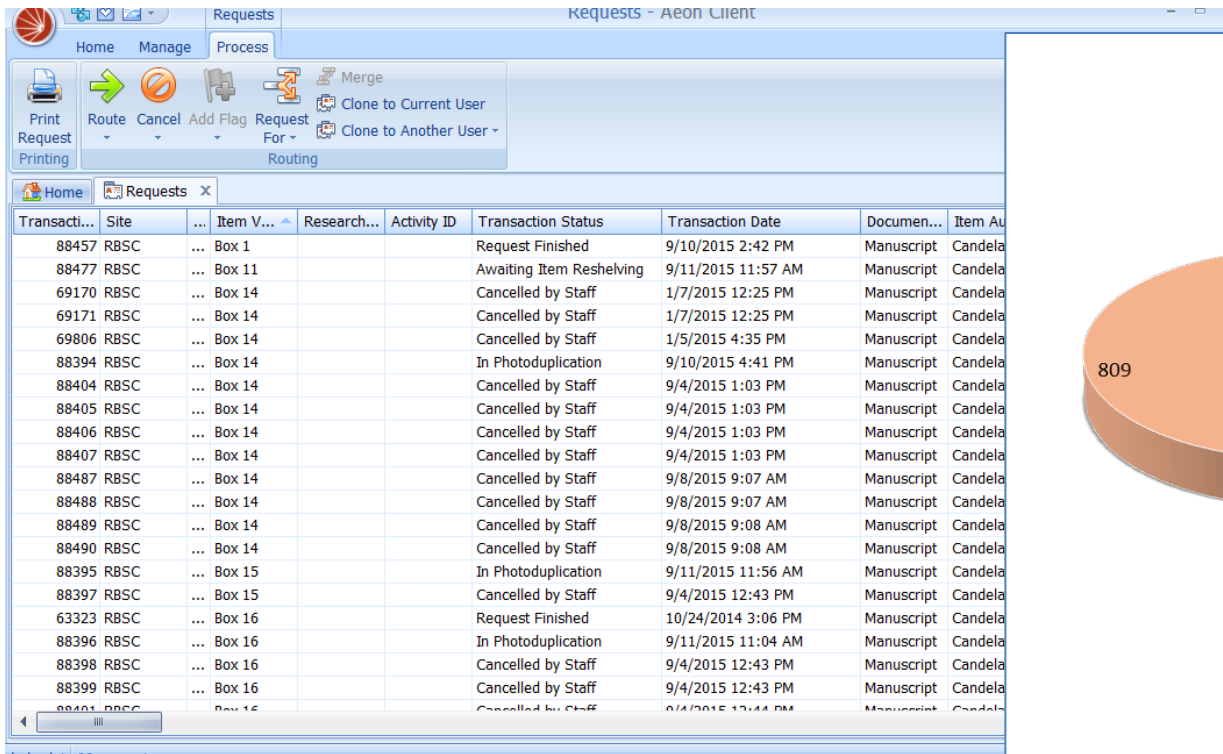
PUL MSS Processing Levels

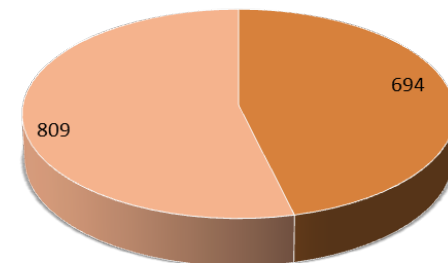| Level	Applies to	Survey and Appraisal	Description	Arrangement	Rehousing / Preservation	Time needed	Examples
5 "Cadillac"	Collections of exceptional artifactual value	• Item-level appraisal	• Collection Level Record in Voyager • Finding Aid with item-level description • Possible creation of additional item-level metadata • Authority control for the most prominent names.	Arranged at folder or item level. Individual folders for the most prominent names.	Refoldered, reboxed, labeled. Custom housing as appropriate. Audiovisual items, including photographs, and folded items fully addressed. Preservation photocopying needs identified.	5 hrs + / linear ft. (Lynch study 1980: 12.7 hrs/ft; Billy Graham Center 1993: 15.1 hrs/ft.; John Delaney's experience ca. 1 day/ ft)	Andre DeCoppet Collection (C0063)
4	Literary and historical collections of significant research value. Series and full folder list.	• Series-level survey and appraisal. If no evident arrangement scheme exists, appraisal on folder level.	• Collection Level Record in Voyager • Finding Aid with hierarchical structure and full folder list • Occasional <scopecontent> description on the folder level • Authority control for the most prominent names.	If no evident arrangement scheme exists, arrangement of most folders within series. Individual folders for the most prominent names.	Possible reboxing and refoldering if not already foldered. Individual treatment of exceptional items only. The presence of audiovisual and photographic items noted as noticed, but generally not addressed.	4 hrs / linear ft. (Greene-Meissner benchmark + added time for full folder list) (add 1 hr/ft. for folder labels)	Melvin Tumin Papers (C1396), Reinaldo Arenas Papers (C0232), Sylvia Beach Papers (C0108)
3	Baseline processing for modern literary collections. Actions of levels 1-2, creation of series or some form of hierarchical structure, and mandatory folder-level inventories for series of high research value (especially Correspondence and Drafts series).	• Series-level survey and appraisal	• Collection Level Record in Voyager • Finding Aid with series structure and **partial** folder list	Arranged at series or subseries level – no arrangement of folders or groups of folders.	Possible reboxing in order to arrange series groupings or to obtain very significant space savings. No refoldering.	3.5 hrs / linear ft. (Greene-Meissner benchmark for professional archivists is 4 hrs / linear ft.)	Booksellers' League of New York Records (C1369), P E N. American Center Records (C0760)
2	Baseline processing for multiple-box accessions, collections slated for ReCAP, and modern office collections. Actions of level 1 + box-level inventory, possibly in combination with series.	• Box or series-level survey and appraisal	• Collection Level Record in Voyager • Collection-Level Record in EAD (DACS single- or multi-level optimum record) • Box list or some form of multi-level description	If added to existing collection, added as separate series at the end.	None	2 hrs / linear ft. (Regina's experience for surveying to the series/subseries level and creating/encoding box list: 1 hr/ft.)	Garland Publishing, Inc. Records (C0850)
1 "Wheel-barrow"	Baseline for new single-box accessions to establish intellectual control. No action taken other than creation of the collection level record. Item additions are dropped in pre-existing	• Collection-level survey and appraisal	• Collection-level Record in Voyager • Collection-level record in EAD (should be DACS single-level optimum record) • Arrangement note says	If added to existing collection, added as separate series at the end.	None	1 hr / ln ft.	Parke Godwin Papers (C0019)

Manage your Resources

Level	Time needed
5 ("Cadillac")	5 hrs + / linear ft. (Lynch study 1980: 12.7 hrs/ft; Billy Graham Center 1993: 15.1 hrs/ft.; John Delaney's experience ca. 1 day/ft)
4	4 hrs / linear ft. (Greene-Meissner benchmark + added time for full folder list) (add 1 hr/ft. for folder labels)
3	3.5 hrs / linear ft. (Greene-Meissner benchmark for professional archivists is 4 hrs / linear ft.)
2	2 hrs / linear ft. (Regine's experience for surveying to the series/subseries level and creating/encoding box list: 1 hr/ft.)
1 ("Wheelbarrow")	1 hr / ln.ft.

Base Your Actions on Data

- Current level of access

- Circulation data

- Project time needed / staff time available

Prioritize Professional over Clerical Work

- Appraise
- Establish intellectual and physical control
- Identify series and logical groupings
- Create description in the form of structured and standards-compliant data
- Create or support delivery systems that offer user functionality

Forget the Paperclips…

- Follow established policies
- Maintain stable environmental conditions
- Prioritize documented user needs over alleged preservation needs
- Preserve & describe at the same level

In case you're wondering: no, this does not mean abandoning preservation tasks altogether!

…and Focus on the Big Picture

- Follow the Principle of Sufficiency
- Leverage your resources to provide the highest possible level of access to the greatest number of collections
- If a machine can do it, make sure it does

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