Advice for Small Museums with Archival Collections

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http://hsp.org/hcipsar
Overview

1. Key concepts
2. Preservation
3. Description (cataloging)
4. Digitization
5. Further resources and community

Everything will be posted to
http://hsp.org/hcipsar/resources
Key Concepts

1. Collections
2. Provenance and Original Order
3. Hierarchical Arrangement and Description
Item vs. Collection

Dear Chas:
Yours,
John.

Dear John:
Yours,
Chas.

Dear Chas:
Yours,
John.

Dear John:
Yours,
Chas.

All images from http://openclipart.org
Provenance and Original Order

- **Provenance**: keep documents grouped into collections by creator
- **Original order**: respect original order established by creator
  
  [note: rule doesn’t extend to original DISorder]
Hierarchical Organization and Description

**Homer Simpson papers, 1987-2014**

**Series I. Family papers, 1987-2000**
- Subseries A. Letters from Marge
- Subseries B. Bart and Lisa report cards

**Series II. Work papers, 1995-2014**
- Subseries A. Nuclear Power Plant
  - Folder: Paychecks
  - Folder: Probation warnings
- Subseries B. Mr. Plow
  - Folder: Receipts and invoices
  - Folder: Commercial planning and script
Follow the existing organizational scheme if it makes sense

- **Document type**
  - Series: Correspondence, Scrapbooks, Financial records

- **Period or phase**
  - Personal papers series: Education, Military, Career
  - Business records series: Miller Co., Miller & Sons, Ark & Miller

- **Department or person**
  - Business records series: CEO, Sales department, Finance office
  - Family papers series: Homer, Marge, Bart, Lisa
Preservation

1. Environment
2. Supplies
Don’t feel bad.

I’ve seen it all.
The Good...
The Bad...
The Ugly...
Environment

Keep temperature and humidity stable!
All day, every day. Avoid extreme fluctuations and UV light.

Ideal Environment

- Temperature: 65-70°F
- Humidity: 40-50%

Keep Track of Your Environment

- Locate most problematic areas
- Data to support future applications for funds

Supplies
Storage Enclosures - Basics

- Storage enclosures should be archival grade, acid free
- Large papers should be stored flat, not folded or rolled
- Papers in boxes should be properly supported, neither bulging nor slumping
Boxes

Document boxes
(aka Hollinger boxes, flip-top boxes)

Record carton (aka Paige box)

Flat boxes
(aka oversize boxes, clamshell boxes)

All images from Gaylord Brothers (http://gaylord.com)
Other Housing

- Archival (acid-free) folders
- Flat file
  → Check Craigslist
- Spacers

All images from Gaylord Brothers (http://gaylord.com)
Storage Tips

- Established archival suppliers include:
  - Gaylord Brothers
  - Hollinger Metal Edge
  - University Products

- To label boxes, purchase foil-backed labels
  - Regular office labels will fall off in 10-20 years

- Remove rubber bands, paper clips from collections
Storage Tips

- Store boxes at least 6” off floor
- Choose metal shelving – avoid wood
  - Check discount restaurant suppliers for sturdy metal shelving
Storage Tips

- Oversize rolled items – roll around OUTSIDE of tube

Do I need to wear gloves in the archives?

Will you be handling photographs?
- Yes: You may need to wear gloves in the archives
- No: Are you a bandleader?
  - Yes: You are already wearing gloves
  - No: Are you performing a medical procedure?
    - Yes: You are already wearing gloves
    - No: Are you Mickey Mouse?
      - Yes: You do not need to wear gloves in the archives
      - No: You do not need to wear gloves in the archives
Description (Cataloging)

1. Reviewing key concepts
2. Metadata
3. Computer programs
4. HCI-PSAR finding aid worksheets
Reviewing Key Concepts

1. Collections are the organizing units of archives
2. Collections should be provenance-based
3. Organize and describe materials within each collection according to a hierarchy
Reviewing Key Concepts

1. Collections are the organizing units of archives
2. Collections should be provenance-based
3. Organize and describe materials within each collection according to a hierarchy

→ When cataloging, start by creating a record for each COLLECTION as a whole
→ Adding lower-level description is optional depending on the complexity and importance of the collection
Metadata is “data about data”

It just means the descriptions of your collections / documents / objects (Title? Creator? Date? etc.)
Structured, standardized metadata helps ensure your materials are **findable** by researchers and that your descriptions are **shareable** with other computer systems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Creator</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Photograph of Bart</td>
<td>Simpson, Homer</td>
<td>1995 August 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photograph of Lisa</td>
<td>Simpson, Bart</td>
<td>circa 1997</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Metadata Standards

[Diagram with arrows connecting three sections: Content standards, Value standards, Format standards.]

Content standards
What kinds of information should I include as the description?

Value standards
What terms should I use to name the people and subjects represented?

Format standards
How should the metadata be structured/encoded?
### Content Standards: Important for Collection Description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collection number/ID</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of repository</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title of collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dates of collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extent (size) of collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of creator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope and contents note (What types of material are included in the collection? What topics are covered?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditions governing access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language of materials</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Content Standards: Recommended for Collection Description


- Source of acquisition
- Biographical/historical note
- Subjects ("access points" or keywords and names)
- Shelf location
- Related archival materials
- Other finding aids
- Cataloger
Metadata Standards

**Format standards**
*How should the metadata be structured/encoded?*

**Content standards**
*What kinds of information should I include as the description?*

**Value standards**
*What terms should I use to name the people and subjects represented?*
Value Standards

- Robert G. Chenhall’s nomenclature – lexicon of object names common in museum cataloging
- Library of Congress – Subject Headings and Name Authority File, http://id.loc.gov
Format Standards

Common format standards make it possible to share records in different computer catalogs and use advanced search capabilities (like faceted searching and filters)

- Librarians use MARC (MAchine Readable Cataloging)
- Archivists use EAD (Encoded Archival Description), an XML schema
- PastPerfect exports Dublin Core in XML

If your metadata is structured, i.e. in a spreadsheet, you can plug the same metadata into different formats depending on need
Common Computer Programs

- Word Processor (Microsoft Word)
- PastPerfect
- Archivists’ Toolkit and ArchivesSpace
## What Program to Use?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Ease of Use</th>
<th>Hierarchical description</th>
<th>Structured format</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Integrated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word processor</td>
<td>Very easy</td>
<td>Unlimited</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PastPerfect</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>+1 level: easy</td>
<td>Yes, but not</td>
<td>$870</td>
<td>Integrated catalog and other features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2+ levels: hard</td>
<td>archival format</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archivists’ Toolkit &amp; Archives Space</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Unlimited</td>
<td>Yes, standard archival format</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Integrated catalog only</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### What Program to Use? (WP)

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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>archival format</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Scope and Content:**

The *Labyrinth* office files span 16 years of meeting minutes, advertising, editorial process, financial information, and correspondence, both within the newspaper and between the newspaper and its readership. This collection serves as a valuable record of how one independent feminist press created a space for community voice. This record contains evidence of debate within the feminist movement, and shows the grassroots nature of many such feminist organizations. This collection would be of interest to anyone who is conducting research on feminist presses of the 1980s and 1990s. Besides giving a sense of the workings of the collective itself, this collection shows the nature of support for the newspaper within the Philadelphia community—in terms of advertising, grant money, or distribution space. Correspondence from the readership show the personal and political intimacy the newspaper often had for its intended audience, and how this intimacy encouraged a larger sense of community.

**Folder List:**

Box 1 [Primarily organization's office files--non-financial]

1. 6. Labyrinth Distribution
2. 7. [Letter 6/92]
3. 8. 9. Labyrinth (distribution information from binder)
4. 10. [Reprints of Labyrinth Articles]
5. 11. [Letter 6/95]
6. 12. [Title/Author forms]
7. 13. [Loose Papers/Letters]
8. 14. Legal Issues
9. 15. Phone Log
10. 16-20. [Binder-Office]
11. 21-22. [Binder-Editorial]
12. 23-25. [Binder-General/Executive Meeting]
13. 26. Phone Log [notebook]
14. 27. Comments Log [notebook]
15. 28-29. Unidentified
## What Program to Use? (PP)

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<td>Free</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Perfect</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>+1 level (container list): easy</td>
<td>Yes, but not archival</td>
<td>696 + 115 = $811</td>
<td>Integrated book, museum catalogs; volunteer, donor database</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archivists’ Toolkit &amp; Archives Space</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Unlimited</td>
<td>Yes, standard archival format</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Integrated catalog only</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
PastPerfect: Collection Record Example
## PastPerfect: Lower-Level Description Options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container List</th>
<th>Linked Records</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Simple to use</td>
<td>- More complicated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Printed report is more straightforward</td>
<td>- Printed report can be confusing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Only allows one level of hierarchy</td>
<td>- Unlimited hierarchy levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Limited metadata (description) options</td>
<td>- As many metadata options as at collection level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PastPerfect: Container List Example
PastPerfect: Linking Records Example
<table>
<thead>
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<td></td>
<td>2+ levels: hard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archivists Toolkit &amp; Archives Space</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Unlimited</td>
<td>Yes, standard archival format (EAD)</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Integrated archives catalog,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>accessions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Archivists’ Toolkit Example
HCI-PSAR Finding Aid Worksheets

http://hsp.org/hcipsar/resources

• Word version (DOC)
• Excel version (XLS)
Worksheet: Creating a Basic Finding Aid for an Archival Collection

This worksheet was created by Celia Caust Ellenbogen in 2011-2014 as part of the Hidden Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories (http://hsp.org/hcipsar), a project of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania with funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Finding aid author:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Repository:</th>
<th>Collection title:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creator:</td>
<td>Type:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dates:</td>
<td>Source:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Collection No.:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extent:</th>
<th>Linear feet</th>
<th>Cubic feet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Note:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Provenance:

Access: Contact the repository for information about accessing this collection.

Related archival collections:

Languages: English

Biographical/Historical Background:

Bibliography:

Scope and Content note:

Microsoft Word (DOC) worksheet

✓ Inventory list option

x EAD output
Worksheet: Creating a Basic Finding Aid for an Archival Collection

This worksheet was created by Celia Guest Entelnogen in 2011-2014 as part of the Hidden Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories (http://hispasr.org), a project of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania with funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Repository:</th>
<th>Finding aid author:</th>
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<td>Collection title:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creator:</td>
<td>Type:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dates:</td>
<td>Date expression:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date begin:</td>
<td>Date end:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulk date begin:</td>
<td>Bulk date end:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection No.:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extent:</td>
<td>Linear feet or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Provenance:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access:</td>
<td>Contact for information about accessing this collection</td>
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<td>Related collections:</td>
<td></td>
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<td>English</td>
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<tr>
<td>Biographical/Historical Background:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Microsoft Excel (XLS) worksheet

x Inventory list option
✓ EAD output
Digitization

1. Permissions
2. Scanning
3. Metadata
4. Computer programs
Permissions

- Ensure that you have the right to copy/distribute the image before you put it online!
  - Check your donor form. If your existing donor form doesn’t have a copyright release, consider inserting it for the future.
- Is the content in the public domain? If so, state that it is. If not, include a disclaimer.
Scanning

- Scanner ideally with low platen temperature
- 400 dpi, 24-bit color, TIFF
- Keep a master unedited copy
  - Plus edited, smaller, access copies if desired
- Sufficient and safe storage space
  - At least two master copies (unedited) stored in different buildings
- Establish file naming conventions
Remember that using standardized metadata conventions helps ensure you include the best information for researchers to find and access your materials and makes your digital collection shareable with central repositories in the future, such as the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA).

Recommended standard: Dublin Core Metadata Initiative:

http://dublincore.org/
Programs

- Omeka
- ViewShare
- PastPerfect
Free for basic, low-cost for enhanced features. They can host the website for you (for a fee). Good for online exhibitions with pictures and text. 

http://omeka.net
Free.

Good for analyzing data and making different types of visualizations (map, timeline, chart, list) that you can embed on your website.

http://viewshare.org
$870 + $445 for online plug-in
Includes hosted site.
Integrated with PastPerfect catalogs.

http://museumsoftware.com/
Further Resources and Community
Resources for Small Archives

This page provides information and resources for small repositories about managing archival collections. This page is a work in progress; more will be added as the Hidden Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories (HCI-PSAR) grows.

Archival Repositories (HCI-PSAR) continues.

I. Archival basics
   A. Archival theory and practice
   B. Archivists' organizations
   C. Learning opportunities

II. Preservation
    A. Preservation basics
    B. Resources for more information

III. Description and cataloging
     A. Theories of arrangement
     B. Finding aids
     C. Electronic finding aids

IV. Institutional development

Archival basics
The overview of general archival information and resources that is included in the HCI-PSAR survey report can be downloaded in PDF format here.

Archival theory and practice
Archivists think about the materials they manage primarily in terms of collections rather than individual items. Understanding archival holdings in larger groupings makes it easier to summarize the entirety of the materials, and also helps maintain the connections between interrelated items. Archivists define collections according to the principle of provenance, which is one of the primary tenets of archival theory. Provenance asserts that the basic defining element of a collection is its creator, which could be the individual, family, or organization who created or received the items in a collection. Materials created or collected by the same individual or group should be kept together.

Therefore, the creators or collectors of the materials should determine the various collections in your repository. Repositories can acquire provenance-based collections from creators or third parties, or they can create collections themselves by assembling materials from different sources together by format or subject (e.g., “Photograph collection,” “Civil War collection”). In the latter

http://hsp.org/hcipsar/resources
Highlighted Resources

- AASLH online webinar, "Basics of Archives"
- Connecting to Collections Online Community
- CCAHA and NEDCC
- Books to consider purchasing:
Advice for Small Museums with Archival Collections

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