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

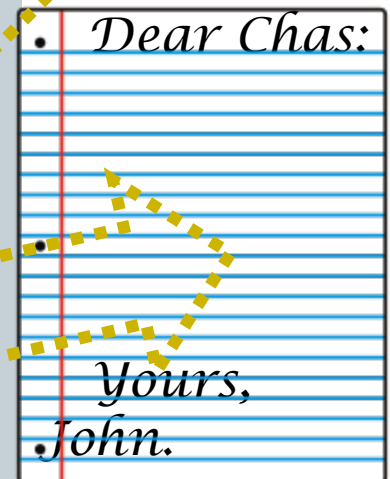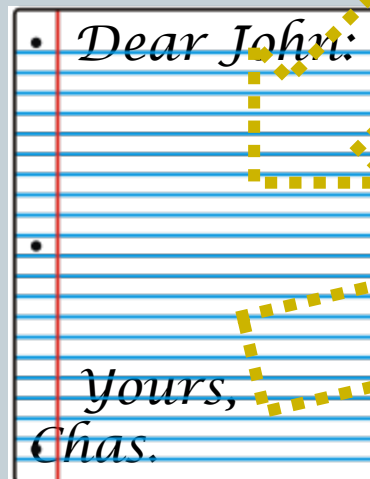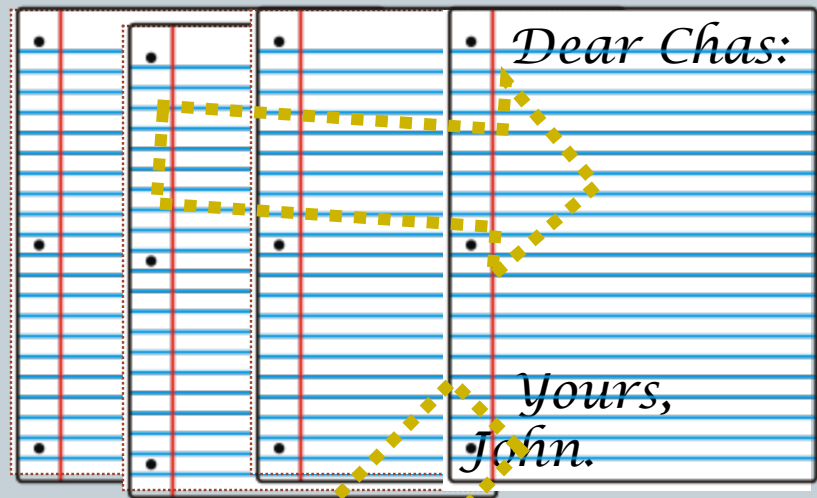Everything will be posted to http://hsp.org/hcipsar/resources

Key Concepts

1. **Collections**
2. **Provenance and Original Order**
3. **Hierarchical Arrangement and Description**

Item vs. Collection

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]*

Dear Chas:

Yours, John.

Dear John:

Yours, Chas.

Dear Chas:

Yours, John.
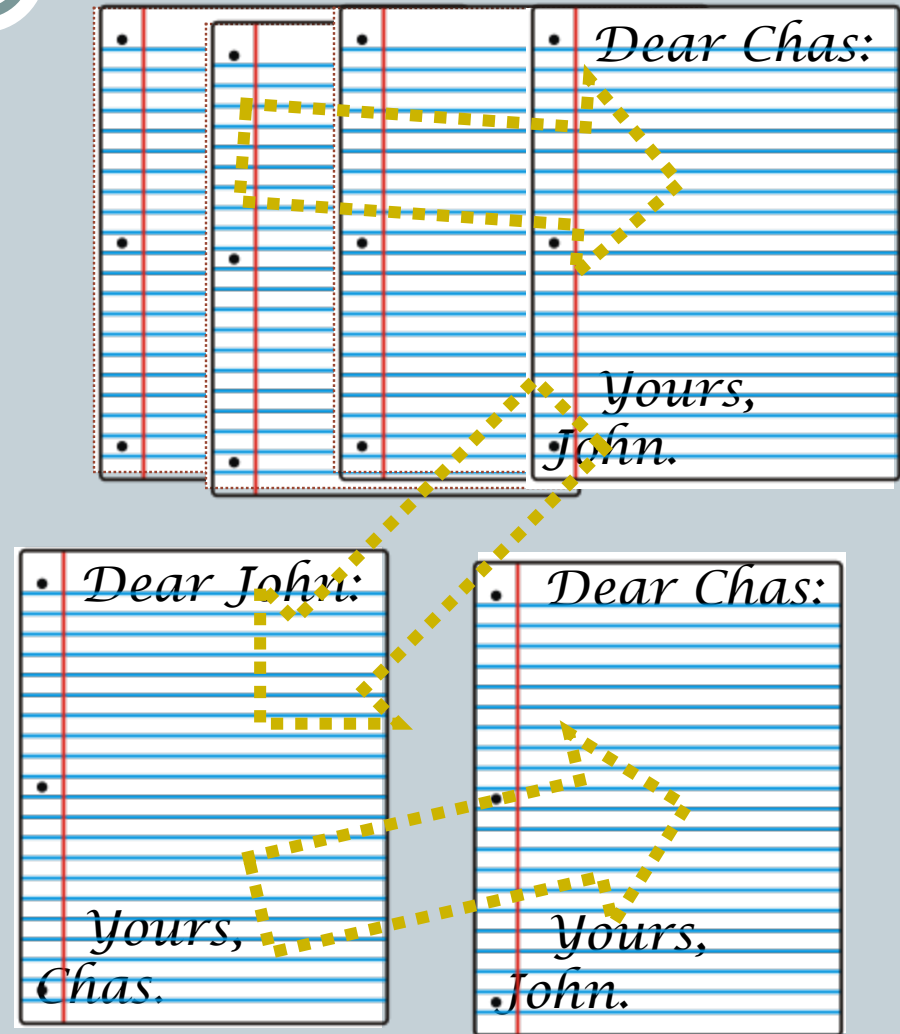
Hierarchical Organization and Description

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

How to Parse Series

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.
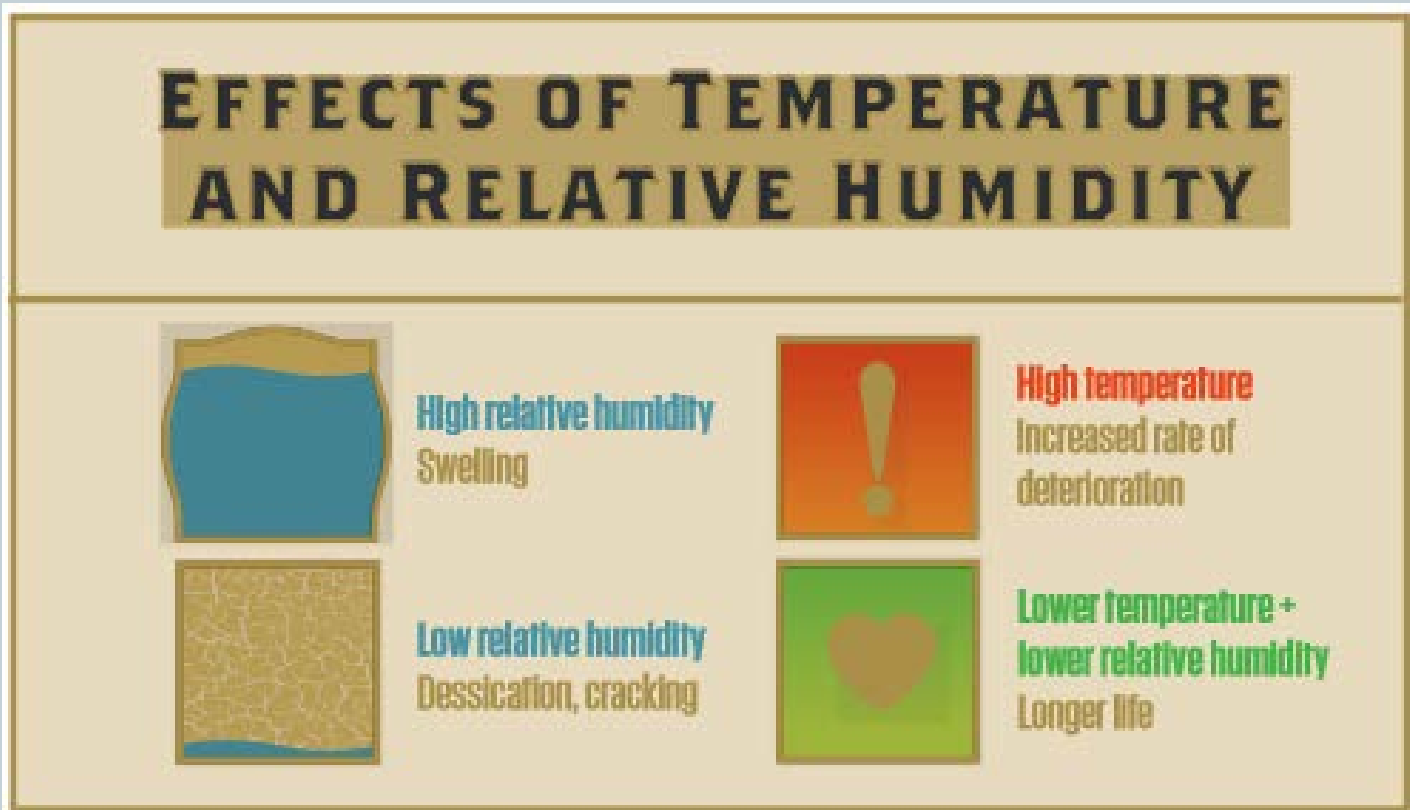
The Good…

The Bad…

The Ugly…

Environment

Keep temperature and humidity stable!

All day, every day. Avoid extreme fluctuations and UV light.

EFFECTS OF TEMPERATURE AND RELATIVE HUMIDITY

High relative humidity
Swelling

Low relative humidity
Dessication, cracking

High temperature
Increased rate of deterioration

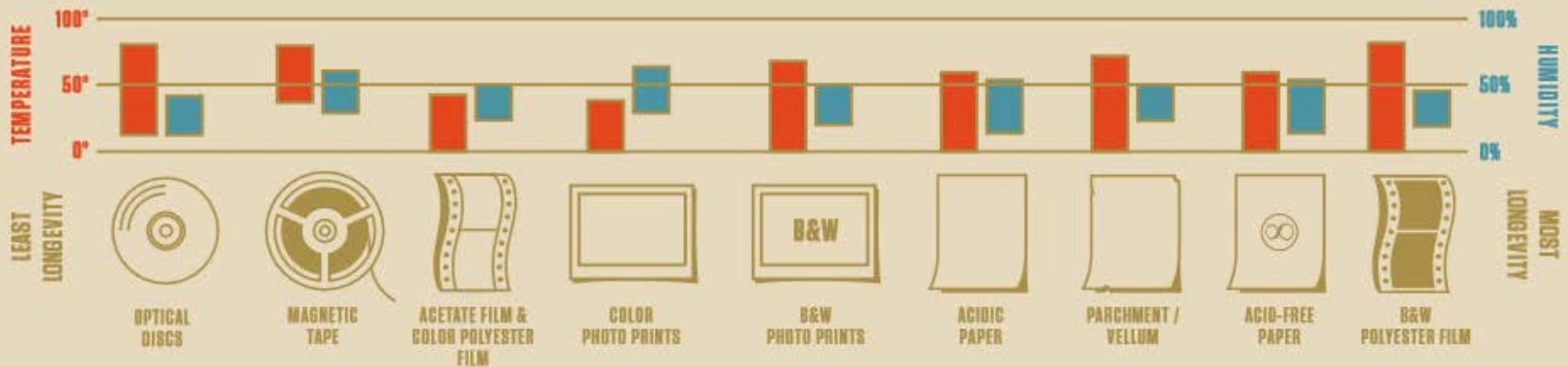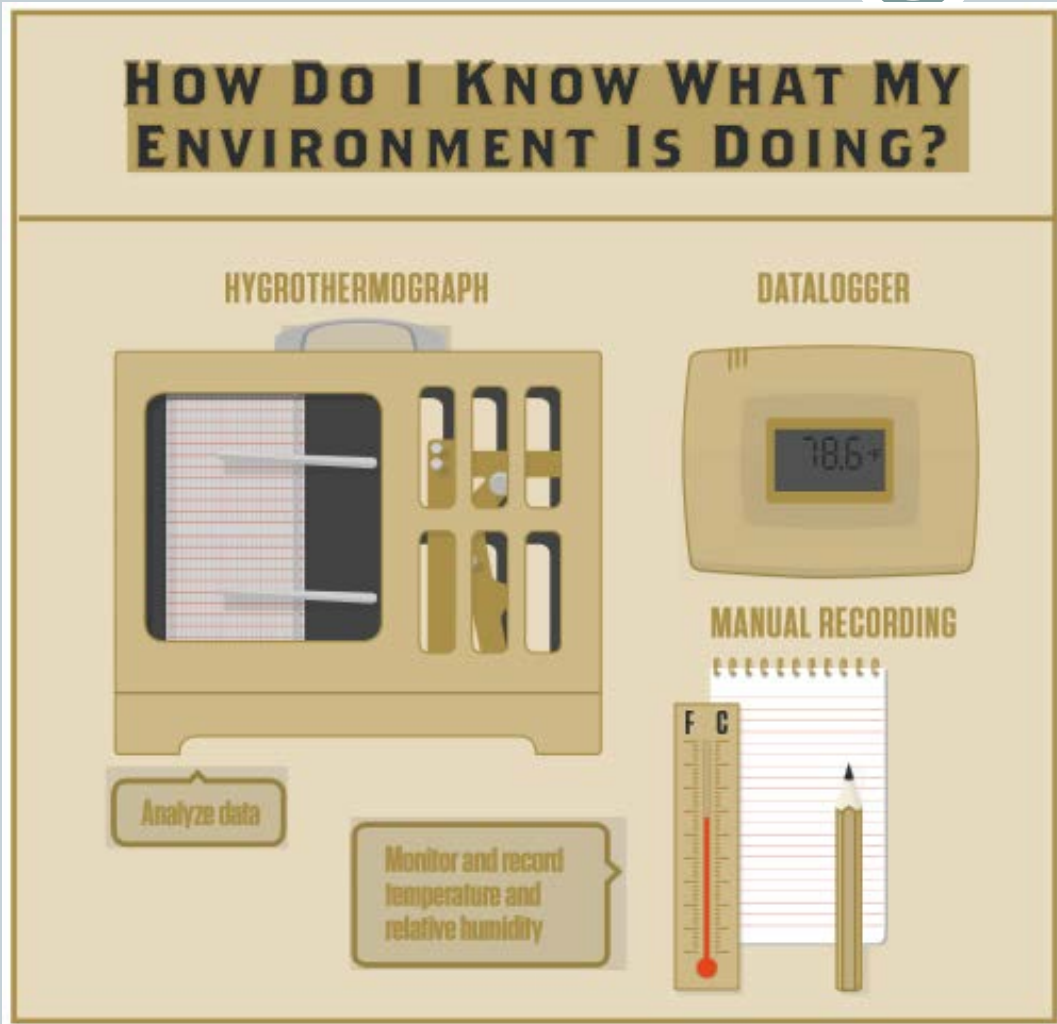**Lower temperature + lower relative humidity**
Longer life

Ideal Environment

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

IDEAL CONDITION RANGES BY MATERIAL TYPE

Keep Track of Your Environment

HOW DO I KNOW WHAT MY ENVIRONMENT IS DOING?

HYGROTHERMOGRAPH

DATALOGGER

78.6°

MANUAL RECORDING

F C

Analyze data

Monitor and record temperature and relative humidity

- 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

Record carton (aka Paige box)

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

DB12102-CH
Black with
Chrome edges

D12102
Blue/Grey

D12102LF
Tan

DB12102
Black

Flat boxes
(aka
oversize
boxes,
clamshell
boxes)

NB18133
Blue/Grey

NBB12
Black

NB23313
Blue/Grey

Other Housing

Archival (acid-free) folders

Spacers

Flat files with flush base

Flat file
→ Check Craiglist

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
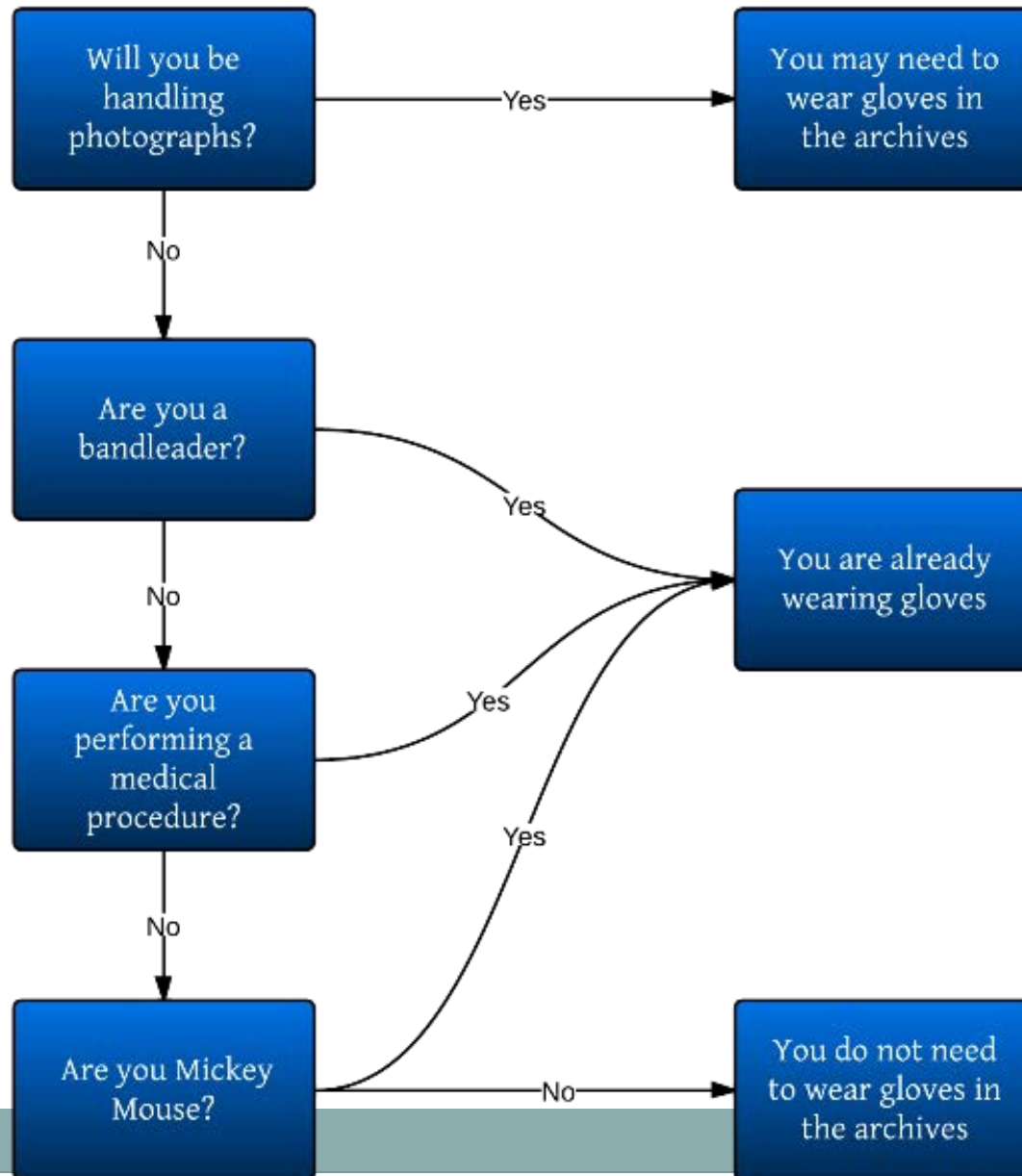 - Check discount restaurant suppliers for sturdy metal shelving

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 are already wearing gloves

Are you Mickey Mouse? —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

Two Simpson photographs, 1990s

vs.

Title	Creator	Date
Photograph of Bart	Simpson, Homer	1995 August 5
Photograph of Lisa	Simpson, Bart	circa 1997

Metadata Standards

Content standards
What kinds of information should I include as the description?
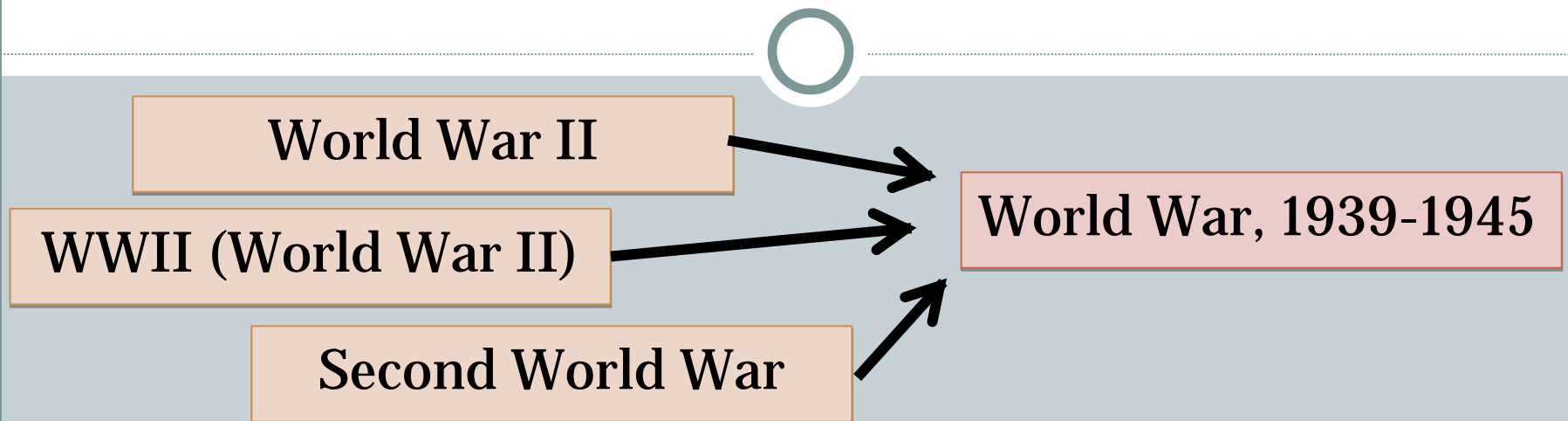
Value standards
What terms should I use to name the people and subjects represented?

Format standards
How should the metadata be structured/encoded?

Content Standards:
Important for Collection Description

"Describing Archives: A Content Standard" (DACS) – free online at http://files.archivists.org/pubs/DACS2E-2013.pdf

- Collection number/ID
- Name of repository
- Title of collection
- Dates of collection
- Extent (size) of collection
- Name of creator
- Scope and contents note (What types of material are included in the collection? What topics are covered?)
- Conditions governing access
- Language of materials

Content Standards:
Recommended for Collection Description

"Describing Archives: A Content Standard" (DACS) – free online at http://files.archivists.org/pubs/DACS2E-2013.pdf

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

Metadata 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?

Value Standards

World War II → World War, 1939-1945

WWII (World War II) → World War, 1939-1945

Second World War → World War, 1939-1945

- 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

- Getty vocabularies – Art & Architecture Thesaurus, http://www.getty.edu/research/tools/vocabularies

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?

Program	Ease of Use	Hierarchical description	Structured format	Cost	Integrated
Word processor	Very easy	Unlimited	No	Free	No
PastPerfect	Easy	+1 level: easy 2+ levels: hard	Yes, but not archival	$870	Integrated catalog and other features
Archivists' Toolkit & Archives Space	Moderate	Unlimited	Yes, standard archival format	Free	Integrated catalog only

What Program to Use? (WP)

Program	Ease of Use	Hierarchical description	Structured format	Cost	Integrated
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Word Processor Example

<u>Scope and Content:</u>

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.

<u>Folder List:</u>

<u>Box 1</u> [Primarily organization's office files--non-financial]

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

What Program to Use? (PP)

Program	Ease of Use	Hierarchical description	Structured format	Cost	Integrated
Word processor	Very easy	Unlimited	No	Free	No
Past Perfect	Easy	+1 level (container list): easy 2+ levels (linked records): hard	Yes, but not archival	696 +115 = $811	Integrated book, museum catalogs; volunteer, donor database
Archivists' Toolkit & Archives Space	Moderate	Unlimited	Yes, standard archival format	Free	Integrated catalog only

PastPerfect: Collection Record Example

Archives Catalog

Edit Mode

Save | Cancel | Change Access#, Object ID, or Loan# | Deaccession | Change Catalog | a | Sort by Accession#

Screen View
- Archive ●
- Map
- Music Collection
- Oral History
- Custom

Other Views
- Appraisal
- Condition ●
- Container List
- Lexicon
- Location
- Notes & Legal
- People - Subjects Classification ● Search Terms
- Relations
- Source
- Lists
- Virtual Exhibit

Actions
- View/Set Up Links

Collection: Samuel W. Pennypacker family papers
Object ID: PM.01
Object Name: Collection | Search Lexicon
Reference Code:
Other#:
Old#:
Accession#:
Home Location: 3-1 (additional items in 3-3 or on display)

Date: 1821-1980 [bulk 1860-191
Year Range: 1821 thru 1980
Catalog Date: 01/31/2012
Cataloged by: Historical Society of PA
Status Date: / /
Status by:
Status:

Image Management –no image

Archive ● Archive ● Map ● Music Collection ● Oral History ● Custom

| Identity Statement | Context | Structure | Conditions of Access and Use | Allied Materials | Description Control |

Scope and Content / Abstract

A large segment of the Pennypacker family papers is comprised of letters received by Samuel W. Pennypacker and his wife, children, grandson, and parents, and date from 1821-1980. The majority of this correspondence is to Samuel Pennypacker between 1860-1916 and includes: letters dating from his time as a soldier in 1863, personal letters from family and friends, business letters to his law practice, letters tracing his genealogy, correspondence with various associations of which he was a member, correspondence from his term as governor of Pennsylvania (1903-1907), and correspondence about his remodeling and landscaping of Pennypacker Mills. There are also 13 copy books of letters written by Samuel W. Pennypacker (1872-1916). The Pennypacker family papers also contain financial and estate records of various Pennypacker family

Multilevel Linking Level of Description: Collection

Title
Samuel W. Pennypacker family papers

Dates of Creation
1821-1980 [bulk 1860-1916]

Dates of Accumulation

Extent and Medium of the Unit of Description (Quantity, Bulk, or Size)
100 cubic feet

Site /Site#:
Event:

Records = 30 | Include in Web Export | Updated by Unknown | Updated 05/23/2012 11:09 AM | Update History

PastPerfect: Lower-Level Description Options

Container List

- Simple to use
- Printed report is more straightforward

- Only allows one level of hierarchy
- Limited metadata (description) options

Linked Records

- More complicated
- Printed report can be confusing

- Unlimited hierarchy levels
- As many metadata options as at collection level

PastPerfect: Container List Example

PastPerfect: Linking Records Example

What Program to Use? (AT/AS)

Program	Ease of Use	Hierarchical description	Structured format	Cost	Integrated
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PastPerfect	Easy	+1 level: easy 2+ levels: hard	Yes, but not archival	$870	Integrated catalog and other features
Archivists Toolkit & Archives Space	Moderate	Unlimited	Yes, standard archival format (EAD)	Free	Integrated archives catalog, accessions

Archivists' Toolkit Example

ArchivesSpace Example

ArchivesSpace

Home / Resources / James Red Papers

← →

- James Red Papers `Collection`
  - SERIES I: BIOGRAPHICAL `Series`
  - SERIES II: EDUCATION `Series`
    - Test file `File`
    - UNIVERSITY OF MARS (UNDERGRADUATE WORK) `Sub-Series`
    - UNIVERSITY OF MARS (Ph.D. WORK) `Sub-Series`
  - SERIES III: WRITINGS `Series`

Basic Information	>
Extents	>
Dates	>
Finding Aid Data	>
Agent Links	>
Subjects	>
Notes	>

Edit   Download EAD   Download MARCXML   Download Container Labels

James Red Papers `Resource`

Basic Information

Title	James Red Papers
Identifier	2009 5
Level of Description	Collection

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:					
Repository:					
Collection title:					
Creator:		**Type:**		**Source:**	
Dates:					
Collection No.:					
Extent:		**Linear feet**	*or*	**Cubic feet**	
	Note:				
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

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

Metadata

- 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

viewshare
interfaces to our heritage

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

PAST PERFECT

$870 + $445 for online plug-in

Includes hosted site.

Integrated with PastPerfect catalogs.

http://museumsoftware.com/

African American Museum in Philadelphia

Honoring our legacy ♥ *Embracing our promise*

www.aampmuseum.org

| Home | Click & Search | Keyword Search | Advanced Search | Random Images | Search Results | Help |

Random Images

More Random Images

More Random Images

This is an MWeb™ Online Catalog.

Further Resources and Community

News Events Blogs

Historical & Heritage Organizations

Historical Society of Pennsylvania

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Sidebar

Historical & Heritage Organizations

History Affiliates

Hidden Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories

Map of HCI-PSAR Participants

Newspapers

Project Staff & Advisors

Regional Directory of Small Archives

Resources for Small Archives

Subject Guide

Question of the Week

What was the name of the Philadelphia Phillies ballpark once located at North Broad Street and West Lehigh Avenue?
10/20/13

View Answer | View All Questions

for SCHOLARS

for GENEALOGISTS & COMMUNITY HISTORIANS

for TEACHERS

for HISTORICAL & HERITAGE ORGANIZATIONS

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) 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. *PastPerfect*
   C. *Electronic finding aids*
   D. *Archivists' Toolkit and Archives Space*
   E. *HCI-PSAR finding aid worksheets*
IV. *Institutional development*

The Hidden Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories (HCI-PSAR) is supported by a grant from the *Andrew W. Mellon Foundation* ⌁.

Related

Landing Page
Archival Adventures in Small Repositories

Page
Archivists' Toolkit and ArchivesSpace

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:
  - Zamon, Christina. *The Lone Arranger: Succeeding in a Small Repository.* (Society of American Archivists)
  - Hamill, Lois. *Archives for the Lay Person: A Guide to Managing Cultural Collections.* (AASLH)
  - Carmicheal, David W. *Organizing Archival Records: A Practical Method of Arrangement & Description for Small Archives.* 3rd edition (2012). (AASLH)

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