

"PastPerfect-ion" : Optimizing PastPerfect for Archival Description

Celia Caust-Ellenbogen

Project Surveyor, Hidden Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories

<http://hsp.org/hcipsar>

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Overview

Among the most significant differences between archival work and museum or library work is archivists' focus on *collections* versus individual *objects*. Where a museum professional catalogs items and a librarian catalogs each copy of a book, an archivist catalogs a body of papers. There are several important reasons for this. The main reason has to do with context and provenance: documents all created by one entity relate to each other, and there is value in maintaining the original context so that researchers can see how those documents are related. Another important reason is expediency: such a huge quantity of important documents exists in archives that taking the time to exhaustively catalog lots of individual documents would mean leaving other documents completely un-described. Moreover, it is easier to summarize available resources to researchers when the materials can be grouped into a finite number of describable units, or collections.

Because PastPerfect is primarily designed for use by museums, it has an item orientation that does not lend itself to archival description. However, PastPerfect does have an archival description module (the "Archives Catalog"), that can effectively describe archival collections if utilized properly. This manual will guide you through optimal processes for describing archival collections in PastPerfect, based on two central tenets of archival cataloging theory:

1. **Hierarchical description.** All of the archival materials at a repository should be logically grouped into collections, which will serve as the main unit for description. Archivists try to follow the principles of "provenance" and "original order," although these guiding principles may not apply in the small repository context. However you define your collections, make sure that each has its own record in your catalog system (PastPerfect). Sub-units within each collection (series, subseries, files, items) may also be defined and described as desired.
2. **Metadata standards.** Metadata means "data about data," and in this context refers to the types of descriptive information that should be supplied (e.g. a collection's title, date range, language of materials, and so on). Archivists' adhere to the standards set by *Describing Archives: A Content Standards (DACS)*, a manual published by the Society of American Archivists. Whatever format you use for your "finding aid" or collection description—a simple word-processed document, a web format like HTML, or PastPerfect—following DACS's principles and rules will help ensure that your description contains the information researchers need.

Hierarchical Description

Principles of Provenance and Original Order

The principle of provenance dictates that documents created by different entities should be kept in distinct collections according to creator. Do not divide or disperse collections based on other factors, do not add materials from other creators into collections, and do not co-mingle materials from various

creators. A corollary to the principle of provenance is that of original order, which dictates that, to the extent possible, materials be kept in the order in which their creator kept them. However, the archivist's principal duty is to render archives accessible and useable. In cases where there is no discernible original order, or if the original order is impractical, it is necessary to impose an order on materials in order to facilitate their use. Archivists must use their judgment in determining when and how to impose an order on a collection.

Principles of Hierarchical Organization and Description

If a collection is complex, archivists identify logical groupings of materials within the whole: series, subseries, and files into which individual items are organized. Archival description should summarize the entire body of a collection, and it may also (but need not) exist at lower levels in the organizational hierarchy. This is called multilevel description. Descriptions given at higher levels are assumed to be valid at lower levels unless otherwise specified. For example, unless the date range of a series is indicated, it is assumed that the date range of that series is the same as the range for the whole collection.

Metadata Standards

Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACs), a manual published by the Society of American Archivists, provides recommendations for what types of information ("metadata") should be given about archival collections. Nine metadata fields, listed below, are required by *DACS* to meet minimum standards for archival description. Many additional optional metadata fields are defined in the *DACS* manual, and of these HCI-PSAR staff recommend eight metadata fields. If you participated in the HCI-PSAR project, you can find the information for most of the 17 metadata fields below in your HCI-PSAR Final Report. Then it is a simple matter of copying the information from your report into PastPerfect and adding to it. If you did not participate in HCI-PSAR, or if you have acquired a new collection since the project ended, you can improve the quality of your collections descriptions by including the fields given below.

The [Metadata Matrix](#) in the next section summarizes the required and recommended metadata fields, and identifies the locations where the fields can be found in the HCI-PSAR finding aids and in PastPerfect.

DACS-Required Metadata for Describing an Archival Collection

1. Collection number/ID—A code or number that uniquely identifies the collection should be used to label the finding aid and corresponding boxes (or even folders and items in the collection). Most small archives use the accession number.
2. Name of repository
3. Title of collection
4. Dates of collection
5. Extent (size) of collection – Usually measured in cubic feet or linear feet (the length of shelf space taken up by the collection)

6. Name of creator – The person(s), family(ies), or organization(s) responsible for the creation or accumulation of the materials.
7. Scope and contents note – Describe the types of materials and range of subjects covered by the collection.
8. Conditions governing access – If there are any restrictions on access, such as patient records unavailable to researchers or private letter restricted by the donor for 20 years, note them.
9. Language of materials

Recommended Additional Metadata Fields

10. Source of acquisition – The donor or source of the collection and the approximate year it was acquired.
11. Biographical/historical note – Provide brief background about the collection's creator or major subjects.
12. Subjects – "Access points," or keywords and names associated with the collection.
13. Shelf location
14. Related archival materials
15. Other finding aids – Note if there is a card catalog, paper inventory, or other aid to help navigate the collection. If the collection was included in HCI-PSAR, write the URL to the online finding aid. (Visit <http://dla.library.upenn.edu/dla/pacscl/index.html>, find the collection, and use the finding aid's permanent URL from the "Summary Information" section.)
16. Cataloger – Name the person or people who cataloged/described the collection and the approximate date (usually year and month or months) they did so.
17. Condition—Notes on the condition of the collection should not be publicly available, but you may wish to keep track of any potential preservation issues or concerns for your own reference.

Metadata Matrix

Element	Description/Notes	Location in HCI-PSAR finding aid	Location in PastPerfect
<i>DACS required metadata</i>			
1. ID	DACS required. A code or number that uniquely identifies the collection should be used to label the finding aid and corresponding boxes (or even folders and items in the collection). Most small archives use the accession number.	n/a	Top of all views > "Object ID"
2. Site	DACS required. The repository where the collection is held.	Cover page	Customize when installing PastPerfect
3. Title	DACS required. Collection title.	Cover page and Summary Information	Top of all views > "Collection" ; Archive view > Identity Statement tab > "Title"
4. Dates	DACS required. The dates when materials in the collection were created.	Cover page and Summary Information	Top of all views > "Date" and "Year Range" ; Archive view > Identity Statement tab > "Dates of Creation"
5. Size	DACS required. The extent (size) of collection is usually measured in cubic feet or in linear feet (the length of shelf space taken up by the collection).	Cover page and Summary Information	Archive view > Identity Statement tab > "Extent and Medium of the Unit of Description (Quantity, Bulk, or Size)"
6. Creator	DACS required. Name the person(s), family(ies), or organization(s) responsible for the creation or accumulation of the materials.	Summary Information	Archive view > Context tab > "Name of Creator"
7. Scope and Content	DACS required. Describe the types of materials and range of subjects covered by the collection.	Scope and Content Note	Archive view > Identity Statement tab > "Scope and Content / Abstract"; Archive view > Context tab > "Scope and Content / Abstract";
8. Access	DACS required. If there are any restrictions on access, such as patient records unavailable to researchers or private letter restricted by the donor for 20 years, note them.	Administrative Information	Archive view > Conditions of Access and Use tab > "Conditions Governing Access"

9. Language	DACS required. Language of materials	Summary Information	Archive view > Conditions of Access and Use tab > "Language/Scripts of Material"
<i>Recommended additional metadata</i>			
10. Source	Suggested. Name the donor (or other source) of the collection and the approximate year it was acquired.	Administrative Information	Source view
11. Bio	Suggested. Provide a biographical or historical note with brief background about the collection's creator or major subjects.	Biographical / Historical Note	Archive view > Context tab > "Administrative / Biographical History"
12. Subjects	Suggested. Keywords and names ("access points") associated with the collection.	Controlled Access Headings	People - Subjects Classification Search Terms view
13. Location	Suggested. Shelf where the collection is stored.	Summary Information	Top of all views > "Home Location"
14. Related	Suggested. Mention related archival collections at other repositories.	Related Materials	Archive view > Allied Materials tab > "Associated Materials in Other Repositories"
15. Finding Aids	Suggested. Mention other versions of finding aids, and if it is online, include a link. For collections surveyed during HCI-PSAR, visit http://dla.library.upenn.edu/dla/pacscl/index.html , find the collection, and use the finding aid's permanent URL from the "Summary Information" section.	Permanent URL on PACSCL finding aid website	Archive view > Conditions of Access and Use tab > "Finding Aids"
16. Cataloger	Suggested. Name of the cataloger and cataloging date	Cover page	Top of all views > "Catalog Date" and "Cataloged by"
17. Condition	Suggested. If the collection was surveyed during HCI-PSAR, you may wish to include the "Explanation of Scores" from its Assessment Report	Assessment Report > "Explanation of Scores"	Condition view > "General Condition Notes"

Inputting Descriptions into PastPerfect

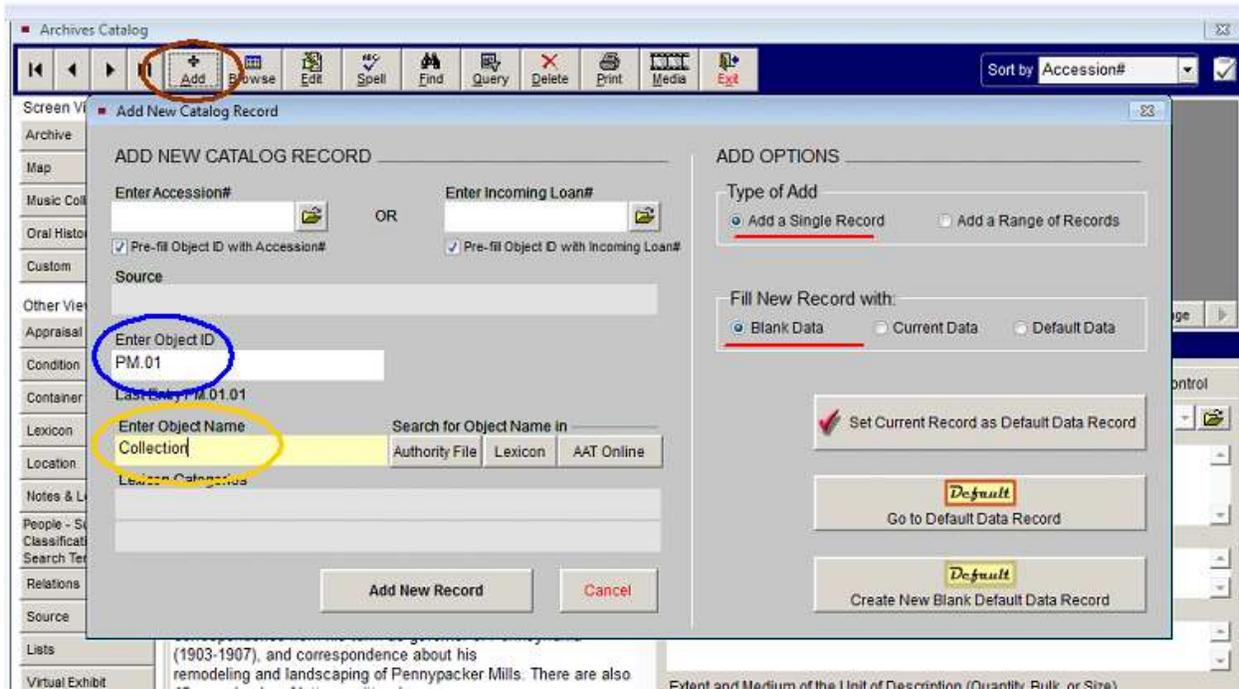
The most important unit of archival organization is the collection, and every collection in your repository should have a catalog record in PastPerfect. PastPerfect provides two options for describing materials below the collection, but in either case you should begin by creating a record for the collection as a whole. Another option is to create a finding aid in another program, such as Archivists' Toolkit or a word processor, and then link it to the basic collection description in PastPerfect. This manual will guide you, step-by-step, through the process of creating a collection level record in PastPerfect that incorporates all the *DACS*-required and suggested fields (enumerated in the [Metadata Matrix](#)).

Next, this manual will discuss the options for describing series, files, or even individual items from the collection under the top-level record ([Lower-Level Description](#)).

Creating the Collection-Level Record

Step 1: Add New Catalog Record

Choose the "Archives" catalog from your home screen on PastPerfect. PastPerfect offers two options for hierarchical description, but we will return to this choice shortly. You will start by entering collection-level description. Inside the archives catalog, click "Add" from the top row of buttons. In the new window that pops up, enter the collection number/ID (*DACS* requirement #1). Remember, this is a unique number or code that you will use to identify the collection, usually the accession number. Next, under "Enter Object Name," write "Collection." Leave the other options on default, and click "Add New Record." An alert will pop up to tell you that "Collection" is not in the object names lexicon. Choose "Save Record with this Unclassified Name" to continue.



Step 2: Basic Information (top of all views)

A page will now open in the "Archive" screen view with the "Identity Statement" tab open. At the top of the page, the object ID and object name will automatically populate. Fill in additional fields at the top of the page: collection title (*DACS* requirement #3) next to "Collection" and collection dates (*DACS* requirement #4) next to "Date" and "Year Range." You may also choose to enter your information as the cataloger and specify the "Home Location" of the collection (if you are working from an HCI-PSAR finding aid, you fill find location on the "Summary Information" page).

Archives Catalog

Edit Mode Save Cancel Change Access#, Object ID, or Loan# Deaccession Change Catalog Sort by Accession#

Screen View: Archive (selected), Map, Music Collection, Oral History, Custom

Collection	Samuel W. Pennypacker family papers	Date	1821-1980 [bulk 1860-191
Object ID	PM.01	Year Range	1821 to 1980
Object Name	Collection	Catalog Date	01/31/2012
Reference Code		Cataloged by	Historical Society of PA
Other#		Status Date	//
Old#		Status by	
Accession#		Status	
Home Location	3-1 (additional items in 3-3 or on display) "Location Note" is on Summary info page		

Archive | Map | Music Collection | Oral History | Custom

Step 3: Archive view, Identity Statement tab

After you have filled out the top of this page, look at the fields in the "Identity Statement" tab on the bottom half of the page. Some of the information you need to enter here will duplicate information from the top half of the page: select "Collection" from the drop-down menu for "Multilevel Linking Level of Description," repeat the collection title under "Title," and the collection dates under "Dates of Creation." Then, enter the size of the collection (*DACS* requirement #5) under "Extent and Medium of the Unit of Description (Quantity, Bulk, Size)." You can measure extent in cubic feet (add together the volume of each box) or in linear feet (measure the length of shelf space necessary to store the whole collection, or the thickness of horizontally filed materials).

The screenshot shows the 'Archives Catalog' interface in 'Edit Mode'. The left sidebar has 'Archive' selected. The main area shows the 'Identity Statement' tab for 'Samuel W. Pennypacker family papers'. The 'Multilevel Linking Level of Description' dropdown is set to 'Collection'. The 'Title' field contains 'Samuel W. Pennypacker family papers'. The 'Dates of Creation' field contains '1821-1980 [bulk 1860-1916]'. The 'Extent and Medium of the Unit of Description' field contains '100 cubic feet'. Annotations include a red circle around 'Archive' in the sidebar, a red circle around 'Identity Statement' in the tab bar, and a yellow box around the dropdown menu. Arrows point from the dropdown to the 'Title' field, the 'Dates of Creation' field, and the 'Extent and Medium of the Unit of Description' field. A blue text overlay says 'Location Note is on Summary Info page' and another says 'Extent is on Summary Info page'.

Step 4: Archive view, Context tab

After you have completed the fields in the Identity Statement tab, open the Context tab. When you click on the "Scope and Content/Abstract" box, it will auto-fill with the note you already inputted on the previous screen. Next, enter the creator of the collection (*DACS requirement #6*) next to "Name of Creator." If you are transferring data from an HCI-PSAR finding aid, you will find this on the Summary Information page. Then, enter the biographical/historical note (suggested #7).

The screenshot displays the Archives Catalog software interface. The main window is titled "Archives Catalog" and features a menu bar with options like Add, Browse, Edit, Spell, Find, Query, Delete, Print, Media, and Exit. A toolbar at the top right shows "Sort by Accession#" and a checkmark icon. The left sidebar contains a "Screen View" menu with "Archive" selected, and other options like Map, Music Collection, Oral History, and Custom. Below this is an "Other Views" section with options like Appraisal, Condition, Container List, Lexicon, Location, Notes & Legal, People - Subjects Classification, Search Terms, Relations, Source, Lists, Virtual Exhibit, and Actions. The main content area is divided into several tabs: "Identity Statement", "Context", "Structure", "Conditions of Access and Use", "Allied Materials", and "Description Control". The "Context" tab is active, showing a "Scope and Content / Abstract" field with a text box containing a detailed description of the collection. A callout box points to this field with the text: "This field will auto-fill with the 'Scope and Content Note' you already entered on the previous screen". The "Name of Creator" field is filled with "Pennypacker family", and a callout box points to it with the text: "'Creator' can be found on the Summary Information page". The "Administrative / Biographical History" field is also filled with a detailed biographical note about Samuel W. Pennypacker, and a callout box points to it with the text: "Use the 'Biographical/Historical Note'". The status bar at the bottom shows "Record 26 of 26", "Include in Web Export", "Updated by: Unknown", "Updated: 05/23/2012 09:53 AM", and "Update History".

Step 5: Archive view, Conditions of Access and Use tab

Now click on the Conditions of Access and Use tab. First, enter the "Conditions Governing Access" (DACs requirement #8). If there are any restrictions on access, such as patient records unavailable to researchers or private letter restricted by the donor for 20 years, note them. Or, you may enter something simple and generic such as "Contact [Your Repository Name] for information about accessing this collection." If you are working from an HCI-PSAR finding aid, you will find an access statement on the Administrative Information page.

Enter "Language/Scripts of Material" (DACs requirement #9). In most cases, it will simply be "English."

If desired, you may enter information about other finding aids—such as a card catalog or a paper inventory—that describe the collection. If the collection was surveyed during HCI-PSAR, you should include a link to the online finding aid on the PACSCL finding aid site. Visit <http://dla.library.upenn.edu/dla/pacscl/index.html>, find the collection, and use the finding aid's permanent URL from the "Summary Information" section. You may simply enter the URL. Or, if you have PastPerfect online and would like there to be a clickable hyperlink in the online record, enter the URL coded in HTML as shown below.

`Click here for finding aid`

will display in the report and in PastPerfect online (if you have it) as

[Click here for finding aid.](#)

The screenshot shows the Archives Catalog software interface. The 'Archive' view is selected in the left sidebar. The main window displays the 'Conditions of Access and Use' tab for the collection 'Samuel W. Pennypacker family papers'. The 'Conditions Governing Access' field contains the text: "Contact Pennypacker Mills for information about accessing this collection." Below this, a note states: "Conditions Governing Access Note" can be found on the Administrative Information page. The 'Language/Scripts of Material' field contains: "Most materials are in English, with some in German." Below this, a note states: "Language of Materials Note" can be found on the Summary Information page. The 'Finding Aids' field contains an HTML link: `Click here for full finding aid`. Below this, a note states: "Include a link to the finding aid for this collection on the PACSCL finding aid site". The interface also shows a toolbar with various actions like Add, Browse, Edit, Spell, End, Query, Delete, Print, Media, and Exit. The status bar at the bottom indicates 'Records = 35' and 'Updated by: Unknown'.

Step 6: Archive view, Allied Materials tab

If there are other archival materials related to this collection (suggested #14) you may wish to note them in PastPerfect. Click the Allied Materials tab in the Archive View. If you are working from an HCI-PSAR finding aid, look for the Related Materials section. (There may not be such a section if no related collections were identified by Surveyors.)

The screenshot displays the Archives Catalog interface for the collection 'Samuel W. Pennypacker family papers'. The 'Archive' view is active, and the 'Allied Materials' tab is selected. The interface includes a toolbar with navigation and action buttons, a left sidebar with various view options, and a main content area with several tabs. The 'Allied Materials' tab is highlighted, and a message is displayed in the 'Associated Material in Other Repositories' section.

Collection Details:

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

Metadata:

- 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:

View Options: Archive (selected), Map, Music Collection, Oral History, Custom

Tabbed Content:

- Identity Statement
- Context
- Structure
- Conditions of Access and Use
- Allied Materials** (selected)
- Description Control

Associated Material in Other Repositories:

Pennsylvania State Archives: Samuel W. Pennypacker papers, MG-171.

There may not be any "Related Archival Materials Note" for this collection. If there are any, it will be in the Related Materials section

Footer: Record 26 of 26 | Include in Web Export | Updated by: Unknown | Updated: 05/23/2012 09:53 AM | Update History

Step 7: Condition view

Notes on the condition of the collection (suggested #17) should not be publicly available, but you may wish keep track of any potential preservation issues or concerns for your own reference. If the collection was surveyed during HCI-PSAR, use the "Explanation of Scores" from its Assessment Report. Choose the Condition view from the "Other Views" options in the left panel of PastPerfect, and enter your notes under "General Condition Notes."

The screenshot displays the Archives Catalog software interface. The main window title is "Archives Catalog". The top toolbar includes navigation and action icons such as "Add", "Browse", "Edit", "Spell", "Find", "Query", "Delete", "Print", "Media", and "Exit". A "Sort by" dropdown menu is set to "Accession#".

The left sidebar contains several view options under "Screen View" (Archive, Map, Music Collection, Oral History, Custom) and "Other Views" (Appraisal, **Condition**, Container List, Lexicon, Location, Notes & Legal, People - Subjects Classification, Search Terms, Relations, Source, Lists, Virtual Exhibit). The "Condition" option is highlighted with a red circle.

The main content area shows the following details for the collection "Samuel W. Pennypacker family papers":

- Object ID: PM.01
- Object Name: Collection
- Reference Code: [empty]
- Other#: [empty]
- Old#: [empty]
- Accession#: [empty]
- 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: [empty]
- Status: [empty]

The "Condition" section is active, showing a "Condition" field with the value "by Historical Society of Pen" and a "Date" field with the value "01/31/2012". Below this is the "General Condition Notes" section, which contains the text: "Explanation of Scores Materials are generally in a paper clippings scrap books and the deeds are folded. A folders and boxes. Letters are interleaved with acid-free paper. Some items are on display, but". A blue text overlay reads: "If desired, enter information from the 'Assessment Report' for this collection in this box".

The "Maintenance Scheduling" section shows "Next Due:" and "Start Date" set to "01/31/2012". Below it is the "Maintenance Notes" section, which is currently empty.

The "Detailed Condition Reports" section is a table with the following columns: Date, Type, Condition, and Condition by. The table is currently empty.

The bottom status bar shows "Record 26 of 26", "Include in Web Export", "Updated by: Unknown", "Updated: 05/23/2012 09:53 AM", and "Update History".

Step 8: People – Subjects Classification Search Terms view

Associating keywords, subject terms, and names ("access points"; suggested #12) can make it easier to browse collections and find related materials. If working from an HCI-PSAR finding aid, look under Controlled Access Headings. Enter "Personal Name(s)" "Corporate Name(s)" and "Family Name(s)" from the finding aid into the "People" section of PastPerfect, and "Geographic Name(s)" and "Subject(s)" from the finding aid into the "Subjects" section of PastPerfect.

Archives Catalog

Sort by Accession#

Collection: Samuel W. Pennypacker family papers
Object ID: PM.01
Object Name: Collection
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:

People, Subjects, Classification, Terms

People

Pennypacker, Galusha, 1844-1916
Pennypacker, Isaac A., 1812-1856
Pennypacker, Samuel W. (Samuel Whitaker), 1843-1916
Roosevelt, Theodore, 1859-1919

Enter "Personal Name(s)" "Corporate Name(s)" and "Family Names" from the Controlled Access Headings page

Classification

Subjects

Montgomery County (Pa.)
Schwenksville (Pa.)
Governors
Judges
Pennsylvania State Capitol (Harrisburg, Pa.)
Pennsylvania--History
Philography
Political campaigns
United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865

Enter "Geographic Name(s)" and "Subject(s)" from the Controlled Access Headings page

Search Terms

Record 26 of 26 Include in Web Export Updated by Unknown Updated 05/23/2012 09:53 AM Update History

Step 9: Source view

Choose the Source view from the "Other Views" options in the left panel of PastPerfect and enter the immediate source of acquisition (suggested #12) under "Source." If you are working from an HCI-PSAR finding aid, look in the Administrative information section.

The screenshot displays the 'Archives Catalog' interface in 'Edit Mode'. The left sidebar shows 'Other Views' with 'Source' selected and circled in red. The main area is divided into several sections:

- Collection Information:** Samuel W. Pennypacker family papers, Object ID PM.01, 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 / /.
- Home Location:** 3-1 (additional items in 3-3 or on display)
- Source View:** Accession Source: Most archival materials were left in the house when it was donated to Montgomery Co. Received Date: [empty]. Credit Line: "Immediate Source of Acquisition Note" is under the Administrative Information section. Received as: [empty]. A 'View Accession Screen' button is located below the credit line.

Lower-level description

Sometimes a collection-level record is not enough to describe the contents of a collection. You may wish to describe the folders in a collection individually, or to break down the collection into a more structured hierarchy with series, subseries, folders, and even items. PastPerfect has two options for lower-level description. One option is to create a container listing as part of a collection record. The advantage to this approach is that it is simpler and more straight-forward. However, it has two major disadvantages: (A) You can only describe one level below the collection—box names *or* folder titles *or* items—and cannot create a further hierarchy; and (B) The available data fields are limited to: location, container, folder, title, description, date, creator, and subjects.

The second option is to separate catalog records in PastPerfect to describe lower levels within the hierarchy, and then link them back to the collection-level record. This is a better choice if you wish to create a multi-tiered hierarchy, or if you wish to include many kinds of metadata for lower levels in the hierarchy. If you have already cataloged items from a collection in PastPerfect, this method will allow you to associate those existing catalog records with the collection-level record. (Unfortunately, this will only work if items are cataloged in the Archives Catalog, not the Objects, Photo, or Library Catalogs.)

A third option is to create a finding aid in another program, such as Archivists' Toolkit or a word processor, and then link it to the basic collection description in PastPerfect. After finding aids have been created in another program, it may seem superfluous to duplicate some of the information in PastPerfect. However, if PastPerfect is your primary collections management system, it is important to have all the necessary data in one place.

Step-by-step instructions for both the [Container List](#) and [Linked Records](#) options, as well as information on linking to an [External Finding Aid](#), are given below.

On the pop-up window that next appears, enter the desired information and click "Save."

Location

Container 1

Folder 4

Title Photographs of Capitol dedication

Description

Date 1906 Year Range thru

Creator

Subjects

Record 1 of 1
Sorted by Container

Fill with Current Data when Adding

Save Cancel

Then click "Add" to input another entry or "Close" to return to the main view. Remember that to return to this edit view later on, if you wish to edit or delete container entries at any time, you can click on the open folder button (next to the plus button) from the main Container List view.

Linked Records option

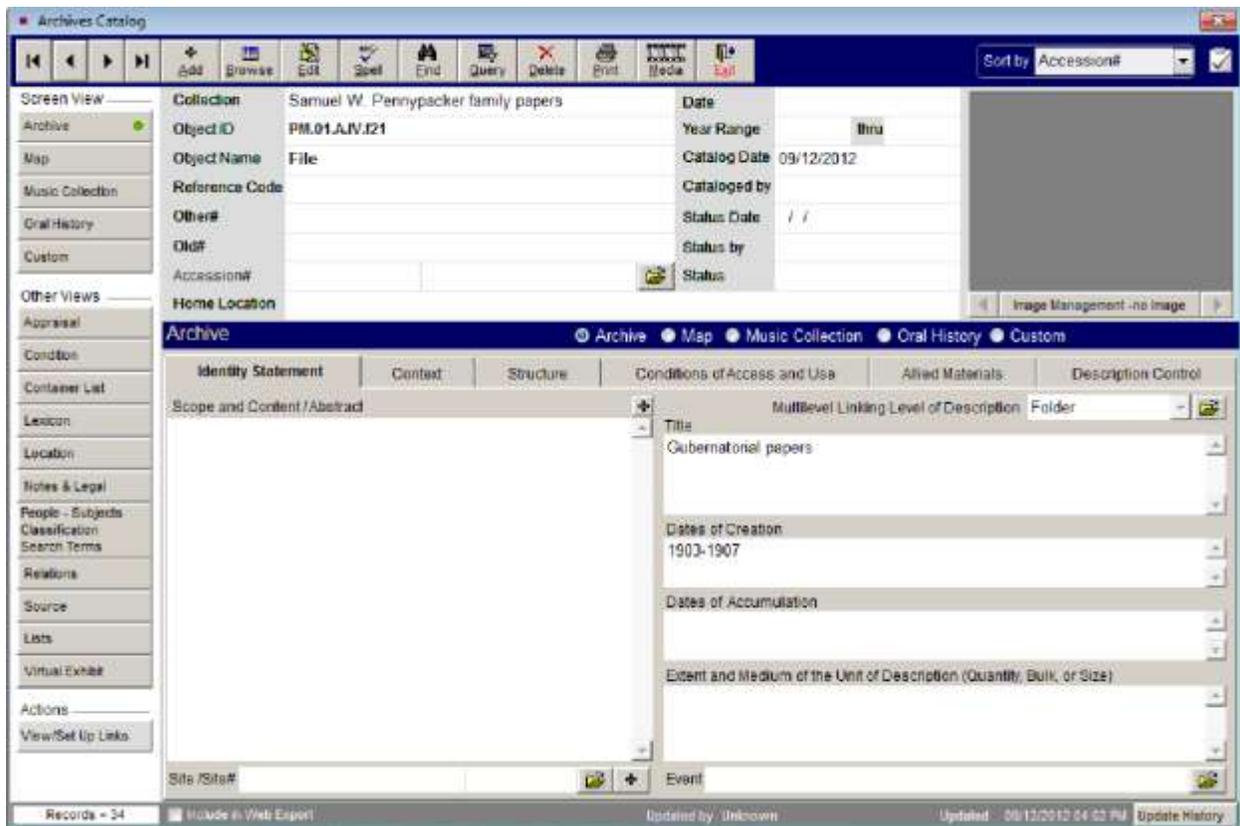
If you wish to create a multi-tiered hierarchy, would like to describe items from the collection in great detail, or already have catalog records in PastPerfect for items from the collection, the linked records option is best for you. If you wish to go with a simpler method to create a single-level list in the collection, try the [Container List option](#) above.

With the linked records option, you can catalog lower levels in the hierarchy—such as a series, or a folder, or an item—in the same manner you just cataloged a collection. Save the collection record you have been working in (the alert will pop up again to tell you that "Collection" is not in the object names lexicon, but you can choose "Save Record with this Unclassified Name" to continue) and click the plus button to start a new record.

If you would like a refresher on creating records, return to the instructions above on how to [Add New Catalog Record](#). (Remember to stay within the Archives Catalog. You can create "relations" between collections in the Archives Catalog and records in the Photos, Objects, or Library Catalogs, but you can't establish a hierarchy and they won't print with the rest of the collection report.) When choosing an Object ID, a multi-part Object ID system is recommended to keep related items together. If a collection is numbered "PM.01," for example, a series within the collection might be numbered "PM.01.A," a sub-series "PM.01.A.IV," a folder "PM.01.A.IV.f21," and an item, "PM.01.A.IV.f21.18."

For the Object Name, enter the unit level (e.g., "Series," "Sub-series," "File") or, if you are describing a particular item, you may enter the genre/form of the item (such as "Photograph" or "Letter"). "File" is already in PastPerfect's lexicon, as are many item genre/forms, but the unit levels "Series" and "Sub-series" are not. Do not worry if an alert pops up to tell you that "Series" is not in the object names lexicon. Just choose "Save Record with this Unclassified Name" to continue.

Use as many fields as you would like to describe the photograph, letter, folder, or series, or whatever unit you are working on. You do not need to fill in all of the *DACS*-required metadata fields because the record will be linked up to the collection-level catalog record you already created. In fact, it is better to *not* repeat information that is the same at the higher level (such as Access Conditions, Language, and Creator). In most cases it is sufficient to record simply the Title and Dates, plus the Object ID and Object Name (auto-filled from the previous screen). Do not forget to also fill in the Collection name at the top of the screen; this will make it easier to see all parts of the collection in the browse view.



If you wish, you may add lots of extra information: a scope/content note that describes in greater detail this particular unit (rather than the whole collection), special access restrictions on sensitive materials, or appraisal of a valuable item, for example.

After you are finished cataloging the sub-unit at hand, save the catalog record.

PastPerfect only allows linking up through hierarchy, so make sure you are on the lower-level catalog record (the one you just created) to link it up to the collection. If you would like to create multiple hierarchy levels, start in the lowest level: after you have created records for items, series, and the collection, link each item record up to a series record and then link the series records up to the collection record.

To link a record up to a higher level, follow these instructions:

1. After you have saved the (lower-level) record, on the Archive View, Identity Statement tab, select a "Multilevel Linking Level of Description" from the drop-down menu for the record you are currently in. Save to continue.
2. Click on the folder button next to the "Multilevel Linking Level of Description" to open the "Multilevel Linking" pop-up form.
3. Click the "Add Link" button.
4. Type in the Object ID for the record you want to link to.
5. Click "Exit" to finish.

The screenshot displays the Archives Catalog software interface. A "Multilevel Linking" dialog box is open, overlaid on the main record view. The dialog box contains the following sections:

- Parent Information:** Object ID: PM.01, Level: Collection, Name: Samuel W. Pennypacker family papers. A green arrow points to the Object ID with the text "4. Type in the Object ID for the record you want to link TO."
- This Record:** Object ID: PM.011, Level: Series.
- Buttons:** View Parent Record, Change Link (highlighted with a yellow arrow and the text "3. Click the 'Change Link' button"), and Remove Link.
- Records in Next Lower Level:** An empty list box.
- Instructions:** "To view lower level records, double click on the Object ID. To establish a multilevel link for this record, enter the Object ID for its parent record."
- Exit:** A button at the bottom of the dialog with the text "5. You're done with this one! Click Exit".

The main record view in the background shows the "Multilevel Linking Level of Description" dropdown menu set to "Series". A red box highlights this dropdown, with a red arrow pointing to it and the text "1. Select a level from the drop-down menu for the record you are currently in (Is it a series? Subseries? Item?)". Another red arrow points from the "Change Link" button in the dialog box to the folder icon next to the dropdown menu, with the text "2. Click on the folder button to open the 'Multilevel Linking' window (to your left)".

The interface includes a toolbar at the top with icons for navigation and actions, and a status bar at the bottom showing "Records = 30" and "Updated 05/23/2012 11:08 AM".

External Finding Aid option

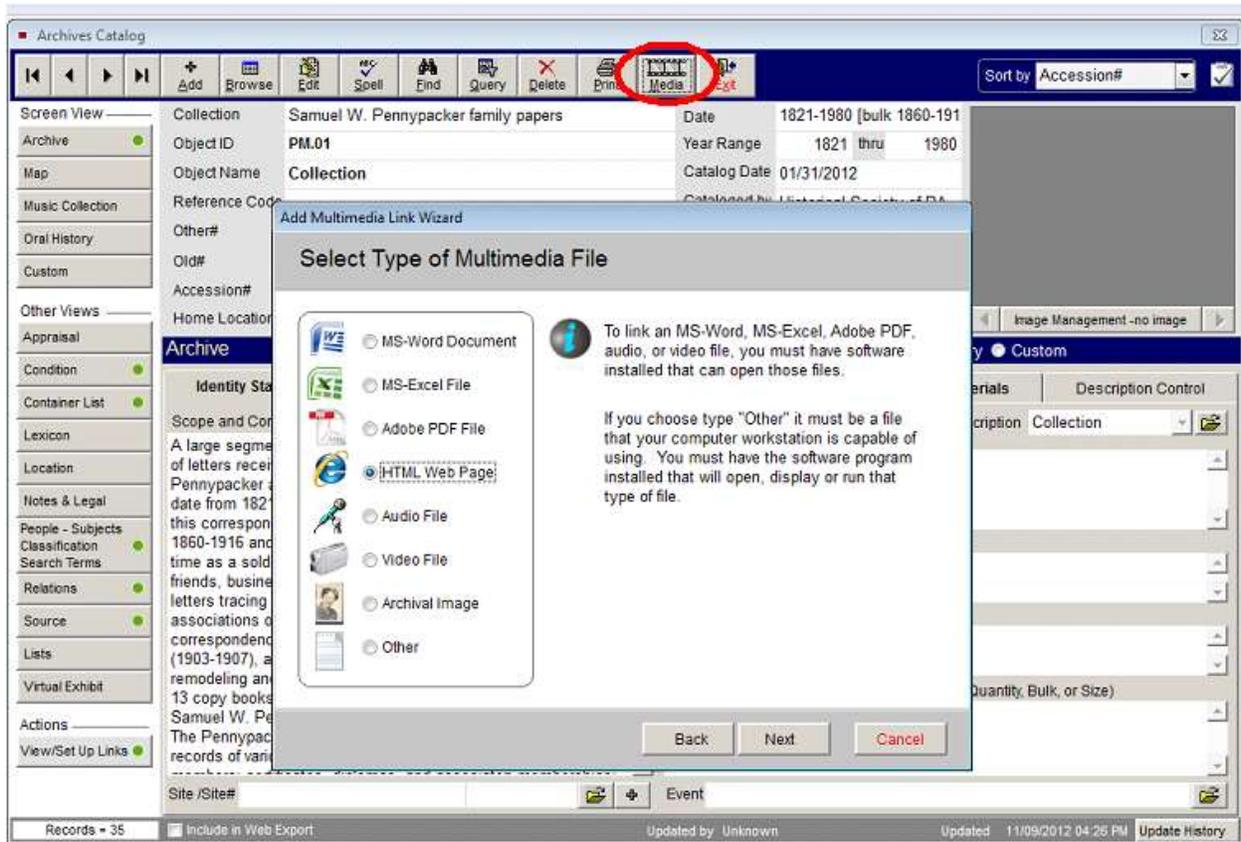
If neither of the options for lower-level description in PastPerfect sound appealing, another option is to make a finding aid in an external program and then link or refer to it in a collection-level record PastPerfect. It may seem redundant to repeat the finding aid information in PastPerfect, but it is important for collections management purposes to have one database where you can track of all your holdings.

You can create a finding aid in a variety of formats, depending on your preference. You may wish to make a document in a word processor (such as Microsoft Word). That will give you the freedom to include any information in whatever layout you would like, although it is recommended that you follow an archival processing manual. Good references include Kathleen D. Roe's *Arranging and Describing Archives and Manuscripts* (Archival Fundamentals Series II; Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005), David W. Carmicheal's *Organizing Archival Records: A Practical Method of Arrangement & Description for Small Archives* (2nd edition; Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004), or Yale University-Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library's *Archival Processing Manual* (1997; <http://www.library.yale.edu/beinecke/manuscript/process/index.html>).

You may wish to download Archivists' Toolkit (<http://www.archiviststoolkit.org/>). It is a free program for managing and describing archival collections. Many professional archives utilize because it is easy to use and outputs finding aid reports in PDF, web-ready HTML, and EAD (the standard interoperable format for archival description). More information about Archivists' Toolkit, including instructions for installation and use, is available on their website at <http://www.archiviststoolkit.org/>. HCI-PSAR staff also recommend the manuals produced by Holly Mengel and Courtney Smerz, *Hidden Collections Processing Project Guide to the Archivists' Toolkit* (March 2012; http://clir.pacscl.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/PACSCL_Archivists_Toolkit_Guide.pdf) and *Installing the Archivists' Toolkit and MySQL and Connecting the Two* (http://clir.pacscl.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/install_MySQL_AT.pdf).

After you have finished your finding aid in another program, create a collection-level record in PastPerfect according to the instructions laid out above (see [Creating the Collection-Level Record](#)). Then, attach a copy of the finding aid to the collection-level record in PastPerfect. You can attach a PDF, HTML, Word DOC, and/or another format with the "Media" button at the top of the record.

1. Click "Media" from the top row of buttons in the Archives Catalog.
2. An "Add Multimedia Link Wizard" window will pop up. Click "Next"
3. Select the type of file you would like to attach. Click "Next"
4. Navigate to the file you would like to attach, change the name of the file as desired, and then click "Finish"



You may also wish to include a reference to the other existing finding aid in the collection record. See ["Step 5: Archive view, Conditions of Access and Use tab."](#) If the finding aid has been posted online, write the URL, or simply include a statement such as "A detailed finding aid for this collection is available to on-site researchers" or "A full finding aid for this collection is located in the Library under call number XXXX.XXX.XXX."

Creating Finding Aids (Reports)

PastPerfect allows you to generate a report which can be used as a finding aid for the collection. While viewing the collection record, choose "Print" button from the top bar on your screen. A new window will pop up ("Print Archive Record"). Focus on the box on the right—"Print Record." Make sure that "Archives" is selected and then choose "Print."

If you used the Linked Records option to describe lower levels in the hierarchy (series, subseries, folders, or items), another window will pop up asking if you want to include the related records as part of this finding aid/report. Choose "Yes."

The screenshot displays the PastPerfect Archives Catalog interface. The main window shows a collection record for "Samuel W. Pennypacker family papers" with Object ID "PML01". The "Print" button in the top toolbar is circled in red. A red text box above it reads: "1. While viewing the Collection record, choose the 'Print' button." The "Print Archive Record" dialog box is open, showing two sections: "Print Catalog Cards or Labels" and "Print Record". In the "Print Record" section, the "Archives" radio button is selected and circled in red. A red text box next to it reads: "2. From the window that pops up, look under the 'Print Record' options (on the right) to ensure that 'Archives' is selected and then click 'Print'". The "Print" button in the "Print Record" section is also circled in red. A "PastPerfect Message" dialog box is open at the bottom, asking: "This is a multilinked record. Do you want to print the other 5 related records as well?". A red text box next to it reads: "3. If you have linked other records up to the main collection record, a message will pop up. Choose 'Yes'". The "Yes" button is highlighted.

Resources

Archivists' **standards for archival description** are laid out in a manual colloquially known as *DACS*. It explains the types of information recommended for inclusion in finding aids, how to formulate titles and names (e.g. when to say "collection" versus "records" versus "papers"), and general principles for archival description.

Describing Archives: A Content Standard. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2007.

The University of Maryland, Baltimore County Special Collections has developed an archival management **workflow that integrates PastPerfect** (they use it primarily for accessioning and collections management) and other access systems (they use a MARC catalog and word-processed finding aids). The manual describing their procedures is available online.

University of Maryland, Baltimore County Special Collections, Albin O. Kuhn Library & Gallery. *Archives Processing Manual: Description*. 2010. Accessed September 20, 2012.

https://wiki.umbc.edu/download/attachments/11437110/UMBCProcessing_Description.pdf?version=1&modificationDate=1279567785000.

For more information about how to use PastPerfect, consult the **User's Guide** on their website. You may wish to only download the Archives guide, [PP5-8.pdf](#).

Witt, Betsy S., Jennifer C. Whitfield, and Adam J. Stepansky. *PastPerfect Software for Museum Collections, Version 5 User's Guide*, 3rd edition. PastPerfect Software, Inc., 2011. Accessed September 20, 2012. <http://www.museumsoftware.com/userguide.shtml>.

For **general information about archival description**, many books and manuals are available. Several recommended by HCI-PSAR staff include:

Roe, Kathleen D. *Arranging and Describing Archives and Manuscripts*. Archival Fundamentals Series II. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005.

Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. *Archival Processing Manual*. 1997. Accessed September 20, 2012.

<http://www.library.yale.edu/beinecke/manuscript/process/index.html>

Carmicheal, David W. *Organizing Archival Records: A Practical Method of Arrangement & Description for Small Archives*, 2nd edition. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004.

If you are considering **switching archival management software**, consult the Council on Library and Information Resource's 2009 report for more information about the advantages and disadvantages of the many available options.

Spiro, Lisa. *Archival Management Software: A Report for the Council on Library and Information Resources*. Council on Library and Information Resources, 2009. Accessed September 20, 2012.
<http://www.clir.org/pubs/reports/spiro/>.