Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
Baseline Processing Documentation

Overview of Baseline Processing

The goal of baseline processing is to physically stabilize collections, to make them serviceable by Access Services staff and useable by researchers, and to provide adequate access to them through collection-level description and a container list. Just as importantly, the goal is to carry out this work in as efficient and effective a manner as possible, given the particular time, space, and staffing constraints of the backlog project. Carrying out this work will allow us to shelve collections at and retrieve material from LSF.

Planning individual projects

Baseline processing requires planning in order to determine what work will and will not be carried out, how the work will be carried out and by whom, and what the timeframe for the work will be. As part of developing a work plan for individual projects (see Appendix A), archivists should be proactive in identifying tasks for students to carry out. In order to take full advantage of the student time alloted to the Unit, it may be necessary for archivists to plan and manage more than one project at a time. That way, while a student is working on one collection, the archivist can be planning and preparing for what work the student can carry out on the next collection.

Preservation

In order to physically stabilize collections, we will ensure that collection material is appropriately housed in boxes and folders, and meets LSF standards for storage. We will also ensure appropriate housing for special formats, such as oversize material, glass slides, audio-visual material, photographs, artwork and objects, and computer media, as necessary.

We will conduct a preservation survey to identify any serious preservation/conservation problems that need to be addressed immediately or in the future, including special formats in need of special housing and/or treatment (such as reformatting) in the future. (See Preservation Survey Checklist form in Appendix B)

We will not carry out any item-level preservation, such as removing hardware and preservation photocopying, unless it is absolutely necessary and warranted by the material (these cases will be the exception and not the rule). In most cases, it will be sufficient to recommend future preservation work as needed.

Arrangement

Accession Level

For collections comprised of more than one accession, we will as a general rule leave the collection organized by accession, with the earliest accession coming first and the latest accession coming last.

Series Level

We may do a finer level of arrangement within individual accessions at the series or subseries level, if the material warrants it and if it is feasible given the time alloted for a given project. For collections and/or accessions of any size, it is preferable to intellectually arrange material into series or logical groupings by either format or activity. In instances where there are existing orderings or groupings, or fragments thereof, the series-level arrangement should aim to build on or clarify the existing order rather than to devise a completely different order, whether or not it is deemed more useful to researchers. We can compensate for a less-than-perfect arrangement through descriptive notes about the arrangement and scope and content of each accession or series within an accession.

File Level

When carrying out series-level arrangement, it is not necessary and indeed may not be possible to physically arrange or rearrange files within series. The time available for the project and the extent of material are the biggest factors to consider with regards to physical arrangement below the series or subseries level. The importance of the creator and the material in question are other factors to consider, but in terms of the backlog project these are secondary to more logistical concerns.

For loose material in boxes, it will be necessary to house material in folders and identify file groupings, if not individual files. For collections or accessions of any size with a large amount of loose material, it will not be feasible to carry out the in-depth examination required to identify and order material into neat files. It will often be necessary to group material under general headings. The operating principle here is to lump materials into file groupings according to how they are similar (e.g. how they broadly relate to a particular activity or project), rather than split up materials into individual files according to how they are different (e.g. how one type of material relates to one part of one activity, while another relates to another person's involvement in a different part of the same activity).

Under no circumstances will we perform arrangement below the file level (i.e. absolutely no item-level sorting).

Situational Decisions

Decisions about when to arrange a collection and to what level will need to be made on a case-by-case basis. However, here are some general rules of thumb:

- If a collection is so disorderly that intellectual arrangement at the series level is insufficient without physically arranging files and at least some sorting of items AND the collection is clearly a priority for fuller processing, then the archivist might decide to

forgo any arrangement at the time of baseline processing and merely describe the collection as is since further work is necessary regardless of what is or is not done as part of baseline processing.

- If you have a similar situation as above BUT the collection is **not** a priority for fuller processing, then the archivist might decide to physically arrange files within series, but would still need to forgo item-level sorting and would instead add descriptive notes clarifying or explaining any inconsistencies in arrangement.

Description

For all collections processed to a baseline level, we will provide both a collection-level description (including biographical note, scope and content note, and collection and administrative information) and a container list. The collection-level description will be output as both a catalog record in Orbis and as the frontmatter of a finding aid, which will also include a container list. At a minimum, the container list will be to the box level to provide staff and researchers with the ability to discern the contents of one box from another, in order to facilitate retrievals from LSF. In some cases, we will create a more granular list, providing up to folder-level description in the container list.

The guidelines for describing collections, as outlined in the Manuscript Unit Processing Manual, will also apply to baseline processing, although the extent and level of descriptive detail will likely vary. For the sake of efficiency, we should capitalize on what dealer or donor information is available, incorporating some or all of the information without necessarily having to verify it or conducting independent research. Doing so will necessitate adding a note to this effect in Processing Notes.

"Single-accession" collections

For collections that are comprised of one accession, the archivist will create a finding aid following unit guidelines. Some backlog collections may already have a preliminary list, which was subsequently migrated into EAD. These can be identified by searching the Yale Finding Aids Database or consulting the FA Filenames spreadsheet located in [xxxx] or looking in usual places listed in Survey Checklist for paper-only versions. The xml files for the migrated lists are located in [xxxx]. The archivist will need to determine whether and to what extent the information in the migrated list can be repurposed in the finding aid.

"Multiple-accession" collections

For collections that are comprised of multiple accessions, the archivist will create a finding aid that describes and lists a collection according to accession and that seeks to incorporate all the component accessions of a given collection regardless of the size of accession and whether or not there is a list for it. Example: William Heyen Papers (http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.heyen).

Each accession is encoded as a <c01>, level="otherlevel" otherlevel="accession". If there are series within an individual accession, these are encoded as a <c02>, level="series"; subseries and/or files would then be encoded as a <c03>. Otherwise, files would be encoded as a <c02>. The <unitid> for each <c01> is a sequential number ("I." "II." "III." etc.); and the <unittitle> is the month and year of acquisition ("June 2009 Acquisition").

Some backlog collections may already have one or more preliminary lists, which were subsequently migrated into an EAD baseline finding aid. (See above for identifying and locating these files.) At the time of migration, an effort was made to identify all component parts of collections, including those that did not have preliminary lists, and incorporate accession-level descriptions of them in the finding aid. When processing backlog collections to a baseline level, the archivist will likely update the existing baseline finding aid and will revisit, as necessary, the decision about what accessions to include or not include as part of the collection.

Since baseline finding aids depart, in significant ways, from finding aids for fully processed collections, it is necessary to provide additional information about the organization of material (Arrangement) and the extent and level of processing (Processing Notes). (See Appendix C for sample text.) In addition, it is necessary to provide special notes in the Overview section about the structure of the finding aid encoded as a High-Level Note, as follows:

> This finding aid describes a collection that has been acquired by the library in discrete segments over time. The narrative sections of the finding aid provide information about the content and context of the collection. The Collection Contents [link] section provides a general description and in some instances a box or folder listing of the various acquisitions of the collection. The Processing Notes [link] section provides information about the way and extent to which the library has processed this collection. The Arrangement [link] section provides information about how material within this collection is organized and tips on how to locate material across various acquisitions.

[Subsequent sections deal with local practice regarding container numbering, labeling, and post-processing.]

Appendix A: Processing Work Plan Template

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Work Plan
Baseline Processing Project

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Archivist:
Date:

Collection title:
Creator:
Current call number(s):
Provenance:
Extent:
Time needed to complete work:
Consolidate call numbers?
        Yes___   No___
        Justification:

Overview:

        Research strengths:

        Types of material present:

        Significant preservation concerns:

Description:

        Current:

        Proposed enhancement:

        Recommended descriptive work for later:

Organization:

        Current:

        Proposed arrangement:

        Recommended arrangement work for later:

Preservation:

        Proposed action now:

Recommended for later:

Work that can be assigned students/processing assistants:

Appendix B: Preservation Survey Checklist

Preservation Survey Checklist

Collection Title:
Extent:

Identify any of the following conditions that would require <u>immediate action</u>:

Potential Mold or Mold Damage   ☐

Recent Pest Damage   ☐

Deteriorating Film Base   ☐
(ie. vinegar smell; nitrate negatives that are fused together)

Identify and flag <u>extreme cases</u> of the following conditions (ie. exceptionally high volume or cause for concern):

Brittle Paper   ☐

Thermofax Papers   ☐

Metal Fasteners   ☐

Newspaper   ☐

Tape   ☐

Identify and flag any of the following <u>special formats</u> that are present in the collection:

Architectural Materials   ☐

Artwork (original)   ☐

Artifacts/Objects   ☐

Audio Materials   ☐
(audiocassette, reel-to-reel tape, compact disk)

Biological Specimans   ☐

Botanical Specimans   ☐

Computer Media   ☐
(disk, hard drive, hardware)

Film   ☐
(negative, slide, motion picture)

Glass   ☐

Photographs   ☐

Scrapbooks   ☐

Textiles   ☐

Vellum & Parchment   ☐

Video Materials   ☐
(videotape, DVD)

Other Special Formats   ☐

Special Formats Note:

Appendix C: Boilerplate for Processing and Arrangement Notes

Processing Notes <processinfo>

Collections are processed to a variety of levels, depending on the work necessary to make them usable, their perceived research value, the availability of staff, competing priorities, and whether or not further accruals are expected. The library attempts to provide a basic level of preservation and access for all collections, and does more extensive processing of higher priority collections as time and resources permit.

SELECT FROM THE FOLLOWING AND MODIFY AS APPROPRIATE:

This collection received a basic level of processing, including rehousing and minimal organization, in [year].

OR

The collection received [preliminary] processing [at the time of acquisition / in such-and-such year(s)]. Further organization, rehousing, and/or description was/were carried out in [year].

AND/OR

The collection is comprised of material formerly classed as: [call number(s)]. Various acquisitions associated with the collection have not been merged and organized as a whole. Each acquisition is described separately in the contents list below, according to month and year of acquisition

Information included in the Description of Papers note and Collection Contents section is drawn from information supplied with the collection [provide specifics here as appropriate—ie. dealer description, donor list, appraisal, etc.] and from an initial survey of the contents OR compiled from individual card catalogs. Folder titles appearing in the contents list below are often based on those provided by the creator or previous custodian. Titles have not been verified against the contents of the folders in all cases. Otherwise, folder titles are supplied by staff during basic processing.

This finding aid may be updated periodically to account for new acquisitions to the collection and/or revisions in arrangement and description.

Arrangement <arrangement>

This collection is organized into # groupings: [Month/Year] Acquisition,…

Material within this collection has been organized by acquisition reflecting the fact that the collection has been acquired in increments over time.

Researchers should note that material within each acquisition overlaps with and/or relates to material found in other acquisitions. For instance, correspondence and writings can be found in all # groupings. In order to locate all relevant material within this collection, researchers will need to consult each acquisition described in the Collection Contents section.

Researchers should also note that similar material can be arranged differently in each acquisition, depending on how the material was organized when it was received by the library. For instance, correspondence in an early acquisition is arranged alphabetically, while correspondence in a later acquisition is arranged chronologically.