

# **Managing Archival Collections without an Archivist on Staff**



**Florida Association of Museums  
Thursday July 22, 2010, 10:00 am – 3:15 pm  
Henry B. Plant Museum, Tampa, Florida**

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# Agenda and Learning Objectives

1. Introductions (names, institutions, job, archival experience?)
2. What is a Professional Archivist
3. General Areas/Domains of Archival Work
4. Lunch 12:15 – 1:15
5. Special Topics – Archival Education, Digitization, Minimal Level Processing, EAD, DACS, Electronic Records
6. Questions/Discussion
7. Plant Museum tour 2:15 – 3:15

**Stop me for questions/comments!**

**As the keepers of history, archivists connect  
the past to the present.**

**We organize and preserve unique or rare  
historical materials so that they are available  
for current and future research.**

# What is a Professional Archivist

- Responsible for appraising, acquiring, arranging, describing, preserving, protecting and providing access to records of enduring value. Sound familiar?
- An archivist's work may be at any stage in the records life cycle, from creation onward. In the U.S., archivists are typically associated with collections of inactive records (records managers handle active records).
- Archivists are sometimes called manuscript curators.

# Major Areas/Domains of Archival Theory and Practice

- Selection, Appraisal and Acquisition
- Arrangement and Description
- Preservation and Protection
- Reference Services and Access
- Outreach, Advocacy, and Promotion
- Managing Archival Programs
- Professional, Ethical, and Legal Responsibilities

Source: Academy of Certified Archivists (<http://www.certifiedarchivists.org>)

The ACA certifies people in the field who have at least a master's degree and a year of appropriate archival experience. The certification process requires candidates to take a written examination with questions in seven "domains" or areas of archival practice.

## But First... A Few Definitions

Note: The definitions used in this workshop are adapted from the Society of American Archivists' *Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology* (<http://www.archivists.org/glossary/>)

### **Archives**

1. Materials created or received by a person, family, or organization, public or private, in the conduct of their affairs and preserved because of the enduring value contained in the information they contain or as evidence of the functions and responsibilities of their creator.
2. An organization or unit within an organization that maintains/collects records of enduring value.
3. The building (or portion thereof) housing archival collections.

# Definitions

## **Record**

Data or information that has been fixed on some medium; that has content, context, and structure; and that is created or received in the course of individual or institutional activity. Records provide evidence of activities for future reference.

In the archival profession the term **Records** can be used broadly (as in the definition above), but it frequently has a more specific meaning referring to the records of a corporate body.



**Anything can be a record!** Archivists routinely work with documents, photos, drawings, maps, recordings, electronic files, artifacts, etc.

# Definitions

## Papers

A collection of personal or family documents; personal papers.

Archivists usually distinguish between records and papers in this way:

- Records are created by corporate bodies including businesses, churches, governments, educational institutions, etc.
- Papers are created by individuals and families. Often called "manuscript collections."

# Selection, Appraisal, and Acquisition

- Archivists identify potential donors and other sources of archival materials by applying knowledge about subjects, people, organizations.
- Selection = Identifying materials to be preserved because of their enduring value, especially those materials to be physically transferred to an archives.
- Appraisal = Determining whether records have permanent archival value.
- Appraisal decisions are based on the materials' provenance and content, authenticity and reliability, order and completeness, types and formats, condition and preservation costs, and intrinsic value.
- Selection, appraisal, and acquisition should take place within the larger institutional collecting policy and mission statement.

# Sometimes appraisal is too easy – e.g., Zora Neale Hurston



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would be a mighty fine thing, the harried older women thought, if more girls felt as Arvey did. Therefore, on that day of Arvey's renunciation, when the girl had finished off by ~~tearfully~~ asking the prayers of the congregation, ~~for~~ their earnest prayers that she might hold out and never, never turn back, but ~~to~~ go on and on to greater grace, "Amen's" burst out all over the church. The pastor himself had gotten to his feet and paid his young sister-in-law a great tribute.

"This young girl's devotion to the cause of Christ makes me feel ashamed." Reverend Middleton had <sup>said</sup> stated with an apostolic look on his face, "Here she is, much too young to be sent into the field as yet, but ready and willing to go, Ready to go wherever the Spirit might send her. Her stand ought to make me, and all of us grown folks feel ashamed. And if you, my flock ~~xxx~~ feel that you can spare me, I will declare myself ready and willing to go."

*Feb. 3*

The flock had cried some more at the thought of the pastor's offer to sacrifice himself, but it was felt that he could not be spared. To compensate for this denial, the parsonage was re-painted, and five dollars a month was added to his salary, bringing the total to seventy dollars a month even.

Five years had passed since Arvey had turned her back on the world and all its sins and snares, Arvey still played the part in the Sunday School, and she took an active part in church work, but she kept strictly to herself. It was not too difficult to see why the community soon put Arvey Henson down as ~~being~~ <sup>one of the</sup> "tetched." Nothing like her sister Rainey, the ~~most~~ <sup>most</sup> ever-been robust, not to say a trifle ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> pretty in the ways that the ~~most~~ <sup>most</sup> full head of curly reddish hair ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> full of ~~cheer~~ <sup>cheer</sup>.

## **Selection, Appraisal, and Acquisition cont.**

- Appraisal may be done at the collection, creator, series, file, or item level.
- Appraisal can take place prior to donation and physical transfer, or after acquisition.
- Appraisal is distinguished from monetary appraisal, which estimates fair market value.
- Implement disposition recommendations or decisions through legal instruments of transfer such as schedules, deed of gift, purchase contracts, and deposit agreements.
- Promote collaborative acquisition and disposition strategies when appropriate.

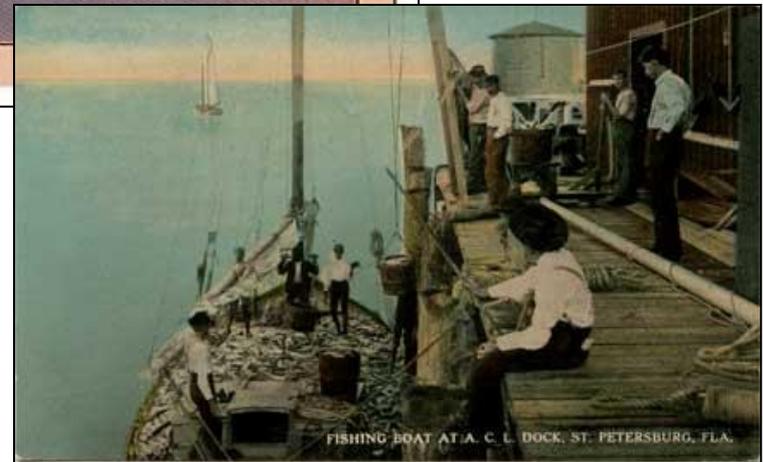
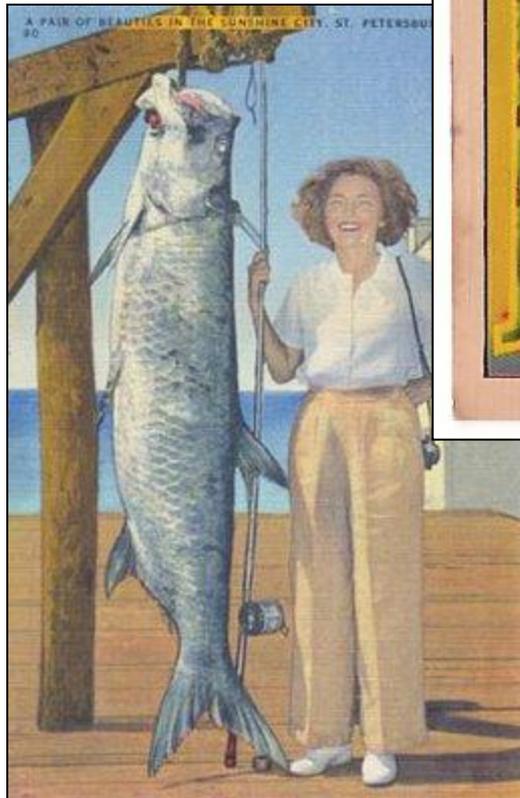
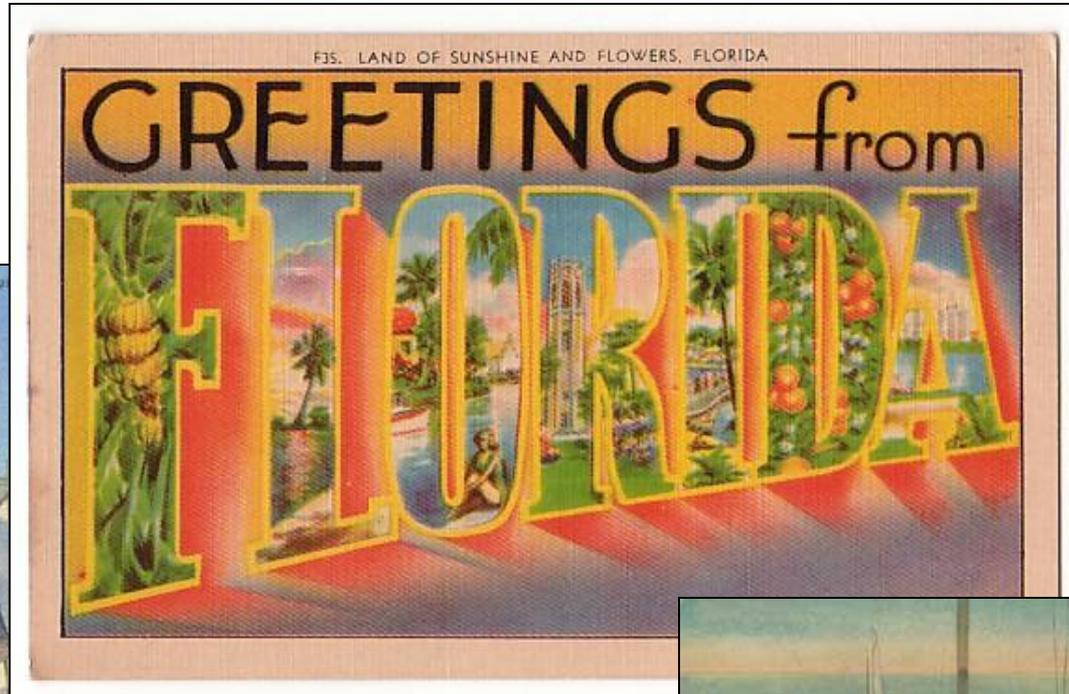
# Collaborative Acquisition: Martin Rikli's Photos of Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935-36



## Selection, Appraisal, and Acquisition cont.

- To appraise, we have to know the values of records such as evidential, informational, intrinsic, administrative, legal, and fiscal. Also need to know past, current, and potential uses of records and papers.
- Evidential value - about the origins, functions, and activities of creator.
- Informational value - The usefulness /significance of materials based on their content. Census records have informational value to genealogists long after those records' evidential value as an enumeration of the population for the government has passed.
- Intrinsic value - in addition to evidential or informational value, a document can have value solely because of its physical characteristics (uses rare inks) or associations (belonged to Lincoln)

**We look at past/current uses of records, and try to predict future use (not always easy!)**





## Selection, Appraisal, and Acquisition cont.

- Archivists often need to educate document creators about the importance of preserving records and papers.
- Requires knowledge of laws, policies, regulations, procedures, legal instruments (deed of gift), and ethical standards relating to acquisitions.
- Requires knowledge of accessioning, inventorying, scheduling, appraisal, and disposition techniques.
- Accessioning = To take legal and physical custody of a group of records or other materials and to formally document their receipt.
- Selection, sampling, weeding, and other techniques to reduce volume.
- Deaccessioning and other techniques of internal disposal.



## Exercise 1

A major monetary donor wants to give you her collection of genealogical research materials pertaining to her family in California. The materials are not within the scope of your collection development policy, but they have high research value. You decide that the best response is to:

1. Accept the collection because it's a win-win situation: the donor is happy, and the materials will be properly preserved.
2. Politely decline the offer, explaining to the donor that the collection is outside of your collecting scope. You also suggest that the donor should consider donating the materials to a repository in California.
3. Accept the collection, with the condition that the donor provides funds for exhibitions and publicity so that researchers in California will be aware of the materials.
4. Accept the collection. When the donor passes away, transfer the collection to a more suitable repository in California.

## Arrangement and Description

- AKA Processing - The arrangement, description, and housing of archival materials for storage and use by patrons. Some archivists include accessioning and/or preservation when defining “processing.”
- Establishing physical and intellectual control over records.
- Analyze the existing arrangement of records and papers and make decisions about any further arrangement that may be necessary.
- Design and implement a descriptive plan to identify and explain the structure, context and content of records and papers to promote their accessibility.

We take this...



**... and turn it into this:**



**Arrangement**

**Preliminary Research (about creator and about materials – some info obtained during acquisition/accessioning)**

Decisions about level of detail of arrangement

**Arrangement (e.g., rearranging, dividing into logical groups, basic preservation, reboxing, etc.)**

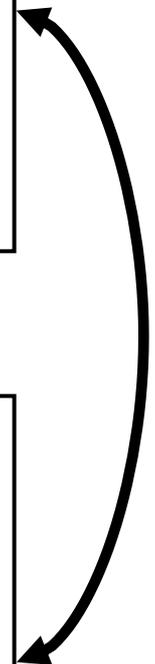
Decisions about level of detail of description

**Gathering/collating info about creator and about records**

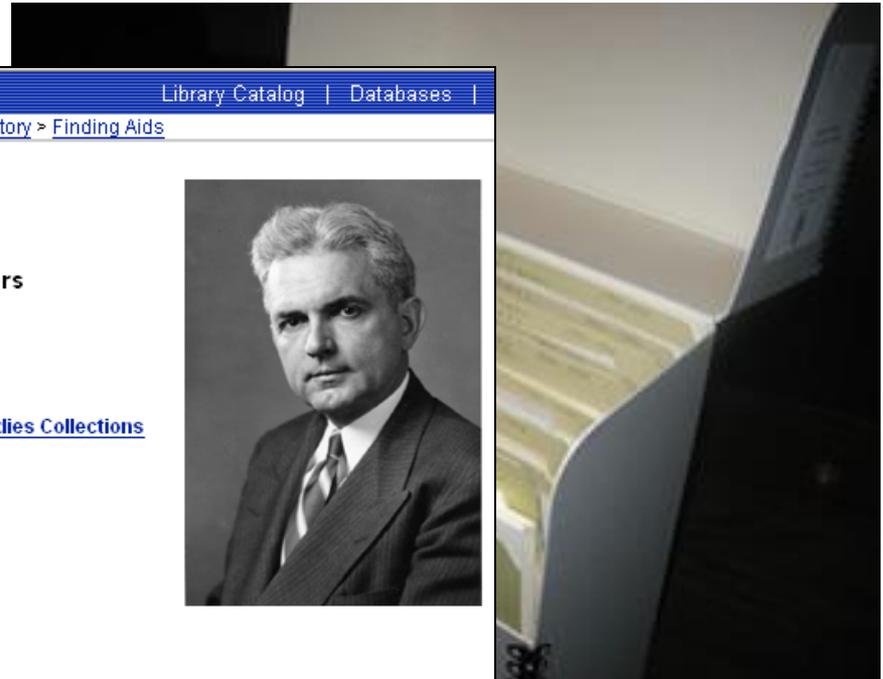
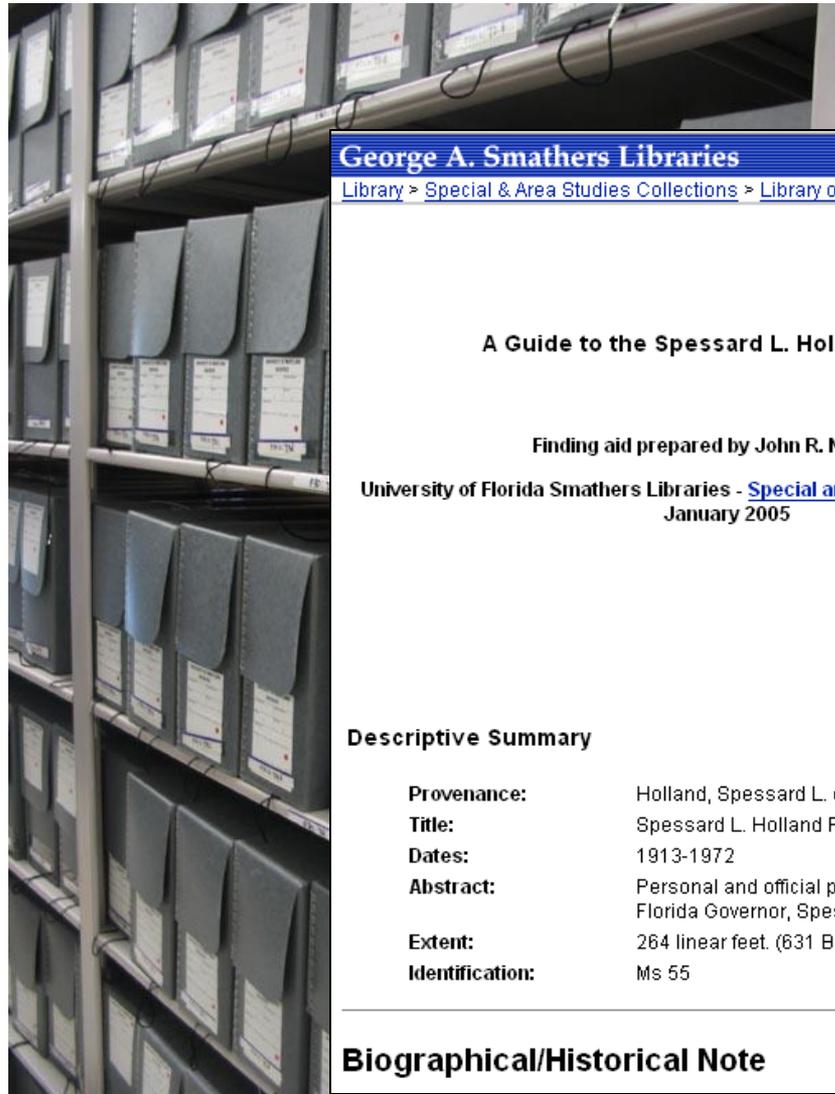
**Entering info into a standard descriptive format (catalog, finding aid)**

**Publishing description (print, online)**

**Description**



# Two products of A&D: Physical control (arranged, protected) & Intellectual control (described, accessible)



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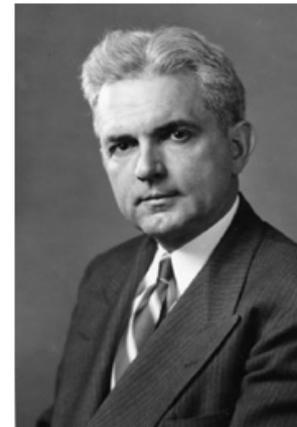
Library Catalog | Databases |

[Library](#) > [Special & Area Studies Collections](#) > [Library of Florida History](#) > [Finding Aids](#)

## A Guide to the Spessard L. Holland Papers

Finding aid prepared by John R. Nemmers

University of Florida Smathers Libraries - [Special and Area Studies Collections](#)  
January 2005



### Descriptive Summary

**Provenance:** Holland, Spessard L. (Spessard Lindsey), 1892-1971  
**Title:** Spessard L. Holland Papers  
**Dates:** 1913-1972  
**Abstract:** Personal and official political papers, dated 1913-1972, of former U.S. Senator and Florida Governor, Spessard Lindsey Holland.  
**Extent:** 264 linear feet. (631 Boxes)  
**Identification:** Ms 55

### Biographical/Historical Note

## Arrangement and Description cont.

- Two fundamental principles of archives: 1) Provenance, and 2) Original Order.
- **Provenance** = The origin or source of records. Usually this is the creator(s) or accumulator(s) of a collection of item. Can refer to the custody or ownership of records.
- Provenance refers to the individual, family, or organization that created or received the items in an archival collection.
- The principle of provenance dictates that records of different origins (provenance) be kept separate to preserve their context. Archivist do not intermingle records of different provenance.

## Arrangement and Description cont.

- **Original Order** = The organization and sequence of records established by the creator or accumulator of the records.
- Maintaining records in original order preserves existing relationships and evidential significance that can be inferred from the context of the records.
- Maintaining records in original order exploits the record creator's mechanisms to access the records, saving the archivist the work of creating new access tools.
- A collection may not have meaningful order if the creator stored items in a haphazard fashion. In such instances, archivists often impose order.

## Arrangement and Description cont.

Hierarchical levels of arrangement and description:

- Repository or institution
  - Record group or collection
    - Series
      - Folder
        - Items

Series = A group of similar records that are arranged according to a filing system and that are related as the result of being created, received, or used in the same activity (e.g., Correspondence, Speeches, Financial). This is the basic unit of organizing and controlling files.

**COLLECTIVE DESCRIPTION!** Archivists think collectively rather than at the item level. Exceptions, of course : special formats such as photos/AV/maps/diaries; also, digitization.

## Arrangement and Description cont.

Example of levels of arrangement and description: Records

Records of the Lloyd Museum of Art (institution)

Records of the Curatorial Department (record group)

Records of the American Art Department (sub-record group)

Objects (series)

Gifts (sub-series)

Correspondence, Jane K. Donor, 1971 (folder)

Letter re: gift of Rothko (item)

## Arrangement and Description cont.

Example of levels of arrangement and description: Papers

Papers of LeRoy Collins (collection)

Correspondence (series)

Personal Correspondence (sub-series)

Jack Q. Black, 1954-1959 (folder)

...

Family Correspondence (sub-series)

Uncle Billy, 1951-1957 (folder)

## Arrangement and Description cont.

- Types of description: Finding aids, catalog records, etc.
- **Finding aid** = A description of records that gives the repository physical and intellectual control over the materials and that assists users to gain access to and understand the materials.
- Components of description: Provenance, title, dates, extent, bio/historical summary, scope/content, etc.
- Requires knowledge of descriptive standards such as the MARC format, Anglo-American Cataloging Rules (AACR2), Encoded Archival Description (EAD), Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACS)
- The descriptive process may begin at or before records creation and continue throughout the life of the records and papers. (Archivists typically begin collecting descriptive info from the time of acquisition, thru physical arrangement, and throughout the life of the collection)

## Example: MARC Catalog Record – Public View

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| <b>Links:</b>             | Descriptive Guide <a href="http://web.uflib.ufl.edu/spec/manuscript/hurston/hurston.htm">http://web.uflib.ufl.edu/spec/manuscript/hurston/hurston.htm</a>   |
| <b>Author, etc.:</b>      | <a href="#">Hurston, Zora Neale</a>   |
| <b>Title:</b>             | <b>Papers, 1926-1960.</b>   |
| <b>Description:</b>       | 2.08 lin. ft.   |
| <b>Additional form:</b>   | <b>Papers</b> have been microfilmed for research use.   |
| <b>Alternate title:</b>   | Herod the Great.<br>Seraph on the Suwanee.  |
| <b>Indexes:</b>           | Index available.  |
| <b>Notes:</b>             | Author, folklorist, anthropologist. Born in Eatonville, Florida; educated at Barnard College and Columbia University. Did research on Afro-American folklore in the American South, Haiti, and the West Indies. Published works include: <i>Of mules and men</i> (1935); <i>Jonah's gourd vine</i> (1934); <i>Their eyes were watching God</i> (1937); <i>Moses: man of the mountain</i> (1939); <i>Seraph on the Suwanee</i> (1948); and <i>Dust tracks on a road</i> (1943), her autobiography. <b>Hurston</b> also wrote short stories, plays, and non-fiction articles. She taught at North Carolina College for Negroes. |
| <b>Summary:</b>           | Correspondence, newspaper clippings, articles, manuscripts, photographs, miscellaneous personal <b>papers</b> . Correspondence concerning race relations, <b>Hurston's</b> writings and fieldwork, personal matters; manuscripts of articles, short stories, plays; biographical material about <b>Zora Neale Hurston</b> .   |
| <b>Subjects, general:</b> | <a href="#">African American authors -- Biography</a><br><a href="#">African American authors -- Correspondence</a><br><a href="#">African American women -- Biography</a><br><a href="#">African Americans -- Folklore</a><br><a href="#">American fiction -- African American authors</a>   |



# Finding Aid Examples

Practices, elements and formats vary widely...

## Exercise 2

You receive Sue Smith's personal papers from her grandson. Among the papers are diaries, writings and correspondence. The letters are mostly to/from family members, and they are arranged chronologically with one folder for each year. However, one folder sticks out because it is labeled "Club Women" and contains letters received from two prominent women in the community. As it turns out, you already have separate collections for these prominent women, and the letters are closely related to other materials in those collections. What do you do with this folder of letters?

1. Keep them with Sue Smith's papers.
2. Separate them into the appropriate collections that already exist for the two prominent community leaders.

## Exercise 3

The Bill Black Papers consist of six cartons of correspondence. The letters are loose in the boxes and are in no discernible order. Most letters are dated, but many are not. Most letters include the full name of the correspondent, but many just have a first name or no name at all. How do you arrange the letters?

1. Do not arrange the letters. In the finding aid, explain to researchers that the letters arrived in no discernible order but that is the original order created by Bill Black.
2. Arrange the letters chronologically, with a separate folder for undated letters.
3. Arrange the letters alphabetically by correspondent name, with a separate folder for letters from unidentified correspondents.

# Preservation and Protection

- Archivists analyze the physical condition of records and papers, and determine appropriate preservation priorities and actions.
- Some "low-level" or basic preservation activities occur during processing: removing harmful materials (rubber bands, rusty paper clips), separating special formats (photos, AV), replacing acidic containers (boxes/folders). We'll revisit this later when we discuss minimal-level processing.
- Long-term storage: using proper containers, using acceptable shelving, and maintaining acceptable environmental controls (temperature/humidity/light).
- Security of records and papers in all media and formats from damage, destruction, theft, and other forms of loss.
- Disaster prevention, response and recovery.

# Preservation and Protection

- Decide when to preserve records and papers in their original format, and when to replace originals with reproductions in the same and/or different media or format.
- Reformatting (e.g., digitization or microfilming)
- Electronic records - data conversion/migration (More on this later...)
- Appropriate conservation treatments (in-house or referral to technical experts).



**Fragile architectural drawings - Proper storage? Conservation treatments? Digitization?**

## Exercise 4

You receive a scrapbook with clippings from prominent newspapers about civil rights activism in the 1950s and 60s. The clippings were taped to the pages, and the tape has discolored and damaged the corners of most of the clippings. The adhesive on the tape is deteriorating and most of the clippings are coming loose. The scrapbook creator wrote captions on some pages beside the clippings. How would you preserve and provide access to the scrapbook? Do you try to keep the scrapbook intact even though it's falling apart? Or, do you reproduce the pages and dismantle the book? Do you do anything at all?

## Reference Services and Access

- Balance/conflict between preservation and access.
- Understand and anticipate the informational needs of researchers.
- Develop access policies and procedures based on institutional mandates, constituencies, the nature of the collections, relevant laws and ethical considerations (e.g., copyright and privacy), and appropriate technologies.
- Provide information about and access to records and papers.
- Be aware of the researcher's right to privacy. Do not disseminate researcher information unless legally forced to do so (e.g., Patriot Act).

## Exercise 5

Researcher Jones asks you for information on early notes and sketches made by Everglades explorers. As it happens, a well known researcher and regular patron of your repository, Professor Smith, was researching the same topic two weeks earlier. Do you:

1. Give the materials to Researcher Jones without mentioning Prof. Smith's similar research.
2. Give the materials to Researcher Jones without mentioning Prof. Smith's earlier research. Contact Prof. Smith and tell her about Jones in case she wants to contact him.
3. Mention to Researcher Jones that another person is researching the same topic and ask for permission to give Jones's contact info to the other person (without naming Prof. Smith).

# Outreach, Advocacy, and Promotion

- Promote the use of records and papers through public and educational programs.
- Dissemination of information: News releases, websites, and curriculum content.
- Develop an understanding of, and support for, the archival program among resource allocators, key constituents, potential donors, allied professionals, etc.
- Exhibitions (physical and online).
- Publicity: print, electronic, and broadcast media.
- Social networking: Flickr, Youtube, Facebook, etc.

# Managing Archival Programs

- Develop a strategic vision for an archival program, establish priorities, continually assess progress toward that vision, and make adjustments as environments and resources change.
- Assess staffing needs, recruit and train appropriate personnel, and support professional development.
- Administer a budget, assess financial performance, etc.
- Plan for facility, supplies and equipment needs.
- Create policies, standards, and procedures that facilitate the range of activities in archival programs.
- Use appropriate technologies to manage an archival program.

# Professional, Ethical, and Legal Responsibilities

- Keep abreast of current issues in the field of archival history, theory, and practice.
- Contribute to the development of the archival profession by conducting research, making public presentations, and participating in professional organizations.
- Conform to professional codes and standards, such as the Code of Ethics of the Society of American Archivists and the SAA/ALA joint statement on Standards for Access to Research Materials in Archival and Manuscript Repositories.

# Professional, Ethical, and Legal Responsibilities

Knowledge of laws, regulations, and ethical considerations governing:

- Loans, deposits, exchanges, and gifts to institutions (including tax consequences)
- Copyright
- Privacy
- Confidential/classified documents
- Freedom of Information

## Exercise 6

A famous psychologist donated his collection of research files before he passed away. The collection is very large, consisting of hundreds of boxes. During processing, you learn that the psychologist did not maintain the anonymity of his research participants in the 1970s (although he did start doing this later). Many of the test participants were school children and he recorded their names and birth dates, as well as personal information about their family histories. Do you:

1. Make the collection available to researchers with a note in the finding aid explaining that there are privacy concerns related to the 1970s research.
2. Make the rest of the collection available, but do not allow access to the 1970s research files for a period of several decades (e.g., 50 years).
3. Close the entire collection because you can't be 100% positive that no other private information exists in later research files.

## Special Topics: Archival Education

- Only a handful of Master's in Archives degree programs
- Many archivists have Master's in Library/Information Studies or Master's/PhDs in subject areas (history, anthropology, etc.) or Bachelor's plus experience
- Georgia Archives Institute, Modern Archives Institute, Western Archives Institute
- Continuing Education: Society of American Archivists (SAA) workshops
- Society of Florida Archivists workshops

# Special Topics: Digitization

Reformatting for preservation and/or access

Considerations:

- Technical knowledge
- Knowledge of standards and best practices
- Purchase equipment/software or outsource
- How will digital objects be delivered to users?
- How will digital objects be preserved over time (reformatting/migrating)?

## Special Topics: Minimal Level Processing

- Huge processing backlog in the U.S. because we've been trying to process most collections as best as possible (very labor intensive!)
- MLP places emphasis on access rather than on control and preservation.
- Collections are only described at the collection and possibly series levels.
- Archivists do not examine each folder. No removal of rubber bands, paper clips, refoldering, etc.
- Pro: It's better to provide access to materials now than to wait years/decades to process them fully (archivists can mediate the process)
- Con: No identification of preservation, privacy, confidentiality, security concerns. No real control over holdings.

## Special Topics: Minimal Level Processing cont.

Consider the following types of collections:

- Papers of a University Professor, 1978-2002 (10 cartons: primarily research files and course materials)
- Records of Acme Company (65 cartons: including Outgoing Letters, Payroll, and Press series)
- Papers of a U.S. Senator, 1989-2004 (960 cartons: constituent case files, legislation, meeting notes, etc.)
- Papers of Author Sue Smith, 1971-1990 (34 cartons: literary manuscripts, correspondence, photos)

## Special Topics: Encoded Archival Description (EAD)

- EAD is a standard format/structure for creating electronic finding aids in XML (eXtensible Markup Language)
- No standardization prior to EAD – a wide variety in descriptive practices among institutions/archivists
- EAD reduces re-keying/editing of descriptive data in finding aid, catalog record, or print formats (i.e., you only have to type it once)
- Although it has been around for over 10 years, there has been a serious lack of user-friendly technology (authoring tools, search systems, etc.)
- Without automated tools, authoring EAD finding aids is VERY time consuming (a serious drawback considering that Arrangement & Description also can be so labor intensive)
- Example: Chad Hanging

# Special Topics: Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACS)

- Standard set of rules for describing archival materials. Is not technology-specific.
- DACS simply tells archivists how to form proper collection titles, date ranges, creator names, etc. Can be used with EAD, MARC, etc. That is: EAD defines the structure/elements, DACS provides the rules for writing the descriptive data in those elements.

*Rule 2.5.4. Record the quantity of the materials in terms of its physical extent as linear or cubic feet, number of items, or number of containers or carriers.*

*45 linear feet*

*5,321 items*

*16 boxes*

## Special Topics: Electronic Records (Migraine Time)

- More and more records are electronic. Communication used to be hand- or type-written letters, telegrams, memos, etc. Now communication is email, texting, twitter. Blogs are replacing diaries and publications.
- Dilemma of preserving and accessing electronic records that are complex by nature, diverse in format and exponentially increasing in volume.
- High rate of technological obsolescence.
- For years the solution has been to print hard copies and/or convert to formats that are considered to be more stable (e.g., converting old WordStar docs to current Word or PDF). Doesn't work with everything, though (AutoCAD, complex scientific datasets).
- Current approaches: create sophisticated systems that can preserve original file formats, as well as derivatives, and will automatically flag file types for reformatting/migration at determined intervals.

**Thank you!**