



TOOL SUITE

Total Cost of Stewardship: **Communication Tools**

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ERRATUM

Pages 20-21, *Total Cost of Stewardship: Communication Tools*, "Processing Plan Template"

A previous version of the *Total Cost of Stewardship: Communication Tools* "Processing Plan Template" was missing the "Processing Work Plan" section and text, including "Proposed Arrangement," "Work Plan," and "Storage and Supplies." The "Processing Work Summary" section header that followed was also missing. The previously missing text has been added and corrected in all file versions of the document.

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MEMBERS OF THE COLLECTION BUILDING AND OPERATIONAL IMPACTS WORKING GROUP

The ideas and tools presented in this publication are a product of the significant contributions and collaboration of all members of our working group.

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- The Smithsonian Archives of American Art, which authored the Archives of American Art Processing Guidelines³
- The University of Florida George A. Smathers Libraries, Cataloging and Discovery Services Department (CatDS) for the Services Provided cataloging levels schema⁴
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INTRODUCTION

In 2021, OCLC Research Library Partnership's Collection Building and Operational Impacts Working Group released a body of material designed to support archives and special collections in making informed, shared collection building decisions that bring together collection management and collection development considerations, and support communication between colleagues in curatorial, administrative, and technical services roles.

This body of material includes:

- The OCLC Research report *Total Cost of Stewardship: Responsible Collection Building in Archives and Special Collections*⁷
- An annotated bibliography of related resources⁸
- A Total Cost of Stewardship (TCS) Tool Suite, comprising a set of Communication Tools⁹ and a set of Cost Estimation Tools¹⁰

The Communication Tools presented here are intended to support efforts to gather and share information about potential acquisitions, to assess the impact an acquisition will have on repository staff and operations, to communicate about the resources required to steward a collection effectively, and to articulate and promote the value that library workers' labor and expertise bring to bear on collections and collecting decisions. The Communication Tools, in tandem with the Cost Estimation Tools, comprise a comprehensive tool suite designed to support working within the Total Cost of Stewardship Framework, a holistic approach to understanding resources needed to responsibly acquire and steward archives and special collections (see figure 1). The framework starts with **documenting collecting priorities** and **determining stewardship capacity**, which supports activities to **gather and share information**, and, ultimately, the ability to **make decisions together**. The tools in the suite are designed to complement and be used in conjunction with each other. An institution may use one or all of the tools, as is most useful to their circumstances.

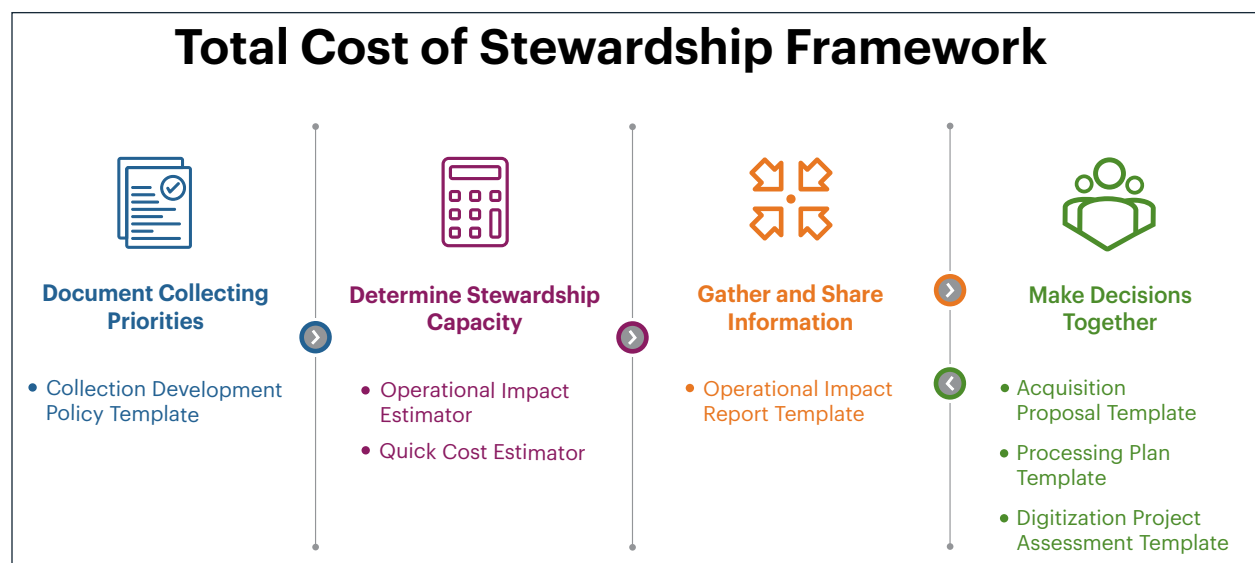


FIGURE 1. Total cost of stewardship Framework

These Communication Tools help institutions think carefully and strategically about the different kinds of potential value an acquisition may bring, including research value, alignment with collecting goals, and support for mission and other central priorities. Ultimately, they are intended to help repositories make informed, shared decisions about collection building with all these factors in mind.

The following tools are intended to be flexible and broadly applicable to many collecting institutions. Included are introductions to each tool that frames its purpose and offers considerations for implementation at your own institution, as well as templates for the tools themselves. The templates are maximal in nature and include many factors that may be relevant in different collecting institutions. Templates will need to be tailored by end users to fit their individual institutional needs, resources, priorities, and workflows.

These Communication Tools may be used iteratively, at multiple points in the acquisitions process or carry through the acquisition life cycle. They can be refined and updated at various stages as stakeholders learn more about collections and their operational impacts.

Collection Development Policy

DESCRIPTION

A statement that outlines the collecting goals and methods of an archives or special collections repository.



HOW TO USE

A robust collection development policy ensures that a repository's collections support the institutional mission of the repository, provides criteria to guide collecting decisions, and supports consistent, careful communication with donors and other stakeholders. A strong collection development policy allows a repository to identify materials that it is particularly interested in acquiring. A collection development policy can also be a tool for identifying formats or items that are out of scope, or for giving a repository a clear and consistent justification for refusing an acquisition that is out of scope or that it cannot adequately care for and does not want to acquire (examples may include artifacts and realia, textiles, or fine art). A policy can also be used to strengthen an acquisitions proposal or a request to funders or administrators to acquire a collection if you can show that a potential acquisition is strongly aligned with established collecting scope and criteria. Finally, a collecting policy can be a useful tool to help prioritize acquisitions or to prioritize the resources devoted to collections once they have been acquired; collections that most closely align with institutional goals should logically also be prioritized for acquisition, cataloging, or processing.

Each institution will need to determine the type of information and level of detail appropriate to include in their collection development policy. Elements to consider include:

- Collecting mandate or mission of institution
- Scope of collection including, if appropriate, limitations or foci on subjects, geographical coverage, formats, time periods, language, etc. This can include rankings of what is collected most comprehensively or actively
- Background or history of the collection, including historic collecting strengths that may no longer be collecting priorities
- User communities the repository serves
- Statement of what you don't collect
- Methods of acquisition (gift, purchase, transfer, etc.)
- Who is authorized to make collecting decisions and sign transfer documents and deeds
- Processes for deaccessioning and acceptable methods of disposition

IMPLEMENTATION

Institutions will want to customize the collection development policy to serve their needs, priorities, and structure. Examples of two collecting policies that include elements that align with the Total Cost of Stewardship Framework are:

- [Smith College Special Collections Collection Development Strategy](#)¹¹
- [Barnard Archives and Special Collections Collection Development Policy](#)¹²

Collection Development Policy Template

Title:

Date of Creation:

Statement of Authorship:

OVERVIEW

Introduction and Statement of Purpose

- Provide information that locates and explains the role of the collection in relation to the mission and goals of the parent institution.

History of the Collection

- Describe the history of the collection, including when and how it was acquired and important influences and milestones in its growth and development.

Audiences For, and Programs and Activities Supported By, the Collection

- Provide information about the constituencies that are expected to make use of the collection and the programs and activities the collection is intended to support.

COLLECTING SCOPE

Collection Strengths and Areas of Specialization

- Describe the strengths of the collection, including areas of depth or distinction, and call attention to its unique, unusual, or notable characteristics.

Current Collecting Focus and Priorities

- Provide information about the priorities and areas of emphasis that inform and guide decision-making about what will be added to the collection, including detail about the following:
 - Geographic scope
 - Chronological scope
 - Languages collected/not collected
 - Topics or subjects collected/not collected
 - Types of materials and physical formats collected/not collected

Identified Gaps, Weaknesses, and Limitations

- Describe known or intentional gaps in holdings as well as any weaknesses or limitations that are relevant to the growth and development of the collection.

Collaborations and Related Collections

- Describe internal or external collaborations; provide information about related collections held by the repository or elsewhere that may affect decisions about what will or will not be added to the collection.

COLLECTION ASSESSMENT AND NEEDS

Reappraisal, Transfer, and Deaccessioning

- Describe the role that reappraisal, deaccessioning, and intra- or interinstitutional transfers play in growing and developing the collection and provide links to relevant policy and procedure documents.

Related Policies and Procedures

- Describe and provide links to documented policies and procedures that are related to or affect the collecting policy, such as those around gifts-in-kind, disposition of unwanted collection material, interlibrary borrowing and lending of collection material, and patron-driven acquisitions.

Procedures for Revisiting and Revising the Policy

- Provide information about when and how the policy will be reviewed and updated, including circumstances that might warrant an ad hoc review.

Operational Impact Report

DESCRIPTION

A report that assesses the cost, time, labor, skills, and other resources required to steward a collection.



HOW TO USE

The operational impact report is intended to outline what resources will need to be dedicated to a collection to steward it effectively and responsibly. This information can be helpful in making decisions about whether to acquire a collection, project planning, grant writing, and making strategic staffing and budget decisions. It can also be useful when asking donors to consider funding the processing of a collection or to communicate to donors the resources that you are committing to preserving their legacy when you acquire a collection. The report will help an institution better assess what resources are required to manage a collection over its life cycle and to determine whether that institution has the capacity to undertake such a project or needs additional resources, skills, space, or capacity.

This report pulls together information about a collection that may be gathered on site visits or in pre-acquisition conversations with collection creators. It reports on the cost estimates for processing, cataloging, and digitizing collections, along with other impacts to institutional capacities and operations. Costs can be estimated using the Operational Impact Estimator or Quick Cost Estimator, and the DLF Digitization Cost Calculator.¹³

This tool can be used on its own to communicate the resources required to undertake a project or accept a collection. It also can form part of a broader Acquisition Proposal Form that combines a report about the operational impact of a potential acquisition with an assessment of its research value to allow collectors and administrators to make an informed decision about the costs and benefits associated with a potential acquisition.

ELEMENTS TO INCLUDE OR CONSIDER

- Overview of the collection
- Size of the collection
- Formats
- Current arrangement of a collection
- Current condition of collection (presence of mold, stability of housing, existing arrangement, etc)
- Presence of restrictions, HIPAA-protected information, PII, or FERPA-protected information that a staff member would need to identify during accessioning or processing
- Anticipated level of processing or cataloging collection will receive
- Anticipated number of hours it will take to process/catalog
- Direct acquisitions costs
- Transfer costs (labor, supplies, shipping)

- Cataloging/processing costs (labor and supplies)
- Storage costs (analog and digital)
- Storage capacity (analog and digital)
- Additional costs that may be associated with preservation, digitization, exhibition, etc.
- Existing staff time and capacity
- Additional considerations such as if material requires specialized knowledge to preserve, describe, or otherwise responsibly manage material (i.e., does cataloging require a specific language or script competency? Would the conservation or digitization process require equipment that the institution doesn't currently have access to?)

Operational Impact Report Template

Collection Title:

Prepared By:

Date:

COLLECTION OVERVIEW

Creator:

Dates:

Size:

Call Number or Accession/Collection Number (if available):

Donor (if other than creator):

COLLECTION ASSESSMENT AND NEEDS

Physical Condition

- Summarize the physical condition of the collection, including current arrangement, condition, and media formats or born-digital files included in the collection and how those will impact the time and effort required to steward.

Organization and Appraisal

- Summarize the intellectual work that would be required to catalog or process this collection, including whether or not the collection is currently organized, if boxes or folders are labeled to indicate their contents, if there are restrictions that a processor will need to identify, and if there are any additional appraisal decisions that need to be made.

CAPACITY ASSESSMENT

Time

- How many person-hours do we project the material will take to process or catalog? Does the collection require interventions such as disk imaging or digitization to be accessible? To what level will the collection be processed?

Existing Capacity

- Are current staffing levels, storage spaces, and available equipment and workspaces sufficient to meet the needs of this collection? Are there any timelines, deadlines, or other contingencies that need to be met for this acquisition to move forward?
- How does this collection rank in terms of existing cataloging or processing priorities?
- Does this acquisition demand significant resources from external partners (digitization or conservation units, external vendors, etc.) and can they provide those resources?

Risks

- Are there any problems or complications that may affect the decision to acquire?
- Are there any additional donor requirements or conditions placed on the gift?

COST OF ACQUISITION AND STEWARDSHIP

Direct Acquisition Costs

- Purchase price (if applicable)
- Purchase price determination (How was the price determined? If there was an appraisal, attach here)
- Market analysis and comparisons (if applicable)

Pre-Acquisition Costs

- Cost of site visits or donor engagement

Transfer Costs

- Shipping/Moving costs
- Packing costs (supplies and travel costs/time, if applicable)
- Accessioning Costs
- Labor and supplies
- Use the Operations Impact Estimator to calculate

Processing/Cataloging Costs

- Labor and supplies
- Use the Operations Impact Estimator to calculate

Preservation Costs (if anticipated/required)

- Use the Operations Impact Estimator to calculate

Digitization Costs (if anticipated)

- Use DLF Digitization Cost Calculator to calculate

Storage Costs

- If known, what will be the physical and/or digital storage costs to manage the material?

Storage Capacity

- Do we have sufficient storage available?
- Would acquiring this collection prevent us from making other acquisitions due to storage availability?

Additional Potential Risks

- Are there additional potential risks that haven't been identified but could add to the cost or our ability to properly steward the collection (i.e., we haven't assessed the A/V materials for sticky shed, so there could be additional A/V preservation costs, or we haven't assessed rights information, which could impact our ability to digitize this collection)?

Funding

- Is there funding associated with the material?
- Are there stipulations to how this funding is used?
- Is this part of a larger development initiative within the institution?
- Is this collection a good candidate for seeking grant funding to process, digitize, or preserve?

Total Cost of Stewardship

- Add up above cost estimates

OVERALL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Impact Assessment

- Briefly comment on the overall impact this collection will have on current operations, including overall cost, staff capacity, storage capacity, and contingencies such as impact on other units or departments.

Acquisition Proposal

DESCRIPTION

A report that helps repositories make decisions about whether to acquire a collection. This report assesses both the research and institutional value of a given collection and the resources that would be required to acquire and steward the acquisition.



HOW TO USE

The acquisition proposal assists stakeholders and resource allocators in making informed acquisitions decisions by outlining the research and institutional value of a collection, its cost, and what would be required to acquire and responsibly steward it. A carefully detailed acquisitions proposal provides resource allocators with the information they need to make an informed decision about whether a collection is worth acquiring and if the repository has or can acquire the resources required to manage it.

This report pulls together information about a collection that may be gathered on site visits or in pre-acquisition conversations with collection creators, expert opinions on collection value and impacts from relevant staff members, and a report on the cost and impact estimates for processing, cataloging, and other collection stewardship needs. Costs and capacity impacts can be reported using the [Operational Impact Report](#).

ELEMENTS TO INCLUDE OR CONSIDER

- Relationship of the collection to the collection development policy, collecting mandate, and/or mission of the institution
- Research value and overall quality of documentation of the collection
- Potential to support other institutional activities or priorities (exhibitions, instruction, etc.)
- Cost of acquisition
- Overview of collection (extent, scope, approximate dates, formats, provenance, and content of creation and use)
- Copy of field survey (if conducted)
- Current condition of collection (presence of mold, stability of housing, existing arrangement, etc.)
- Presence of restrictions or legally protected information
- Rights information
- Operational Impact Report (report that assesses the cost, time, labor, skills, space, and other resources required to steward a collection)
- Potential Risks

Acquisition Proposal Template

Proposed By:

Date:

COLLECTION OVERVIEW

Creator:

Dates:

Size:

Donor (if other than creator):

RESEARCH AND INSTITUTIONAL VALUE

Collecting Area

- Collecting Area
- Curator/selector/proposer

Collection Policy

- How does this material fulfill the stated goals in the collection development policy?
- How would this collection help support our mission?

Research Value

- List anticipated audiences and uses:
- Does the collection present particular exhibition or teaching opportunities?
- Is the information in the collection largely unique or unavailable elsewhere?
- Quality of documentation (How well do the materials document and reflect the organization or person's work?)

Diversity and Documentation Value

- Does this collection document an underdocumented community, help to diversify our collections, or meaningfully fill a gap in the historical record?

Donor Relations Value

- Does this collection, donor, or creator have the potential to connect us with other meaningful collections or donors?
- Have we made any commitments to our donors to digitize material, mount an exhibition, etc.?

Related Collections in the Repository

- Do we have other material by this creator or closely related collections? Would this collection fill an identified gap in existing holdings?
- What are the use statistics of similar related collections over the past five years?

Related Collections at Other Repositories

- What other repositories hold related collections?
- Is this material part of a larger collection that is held by another institution? If so, has it been offered to that institution?
- Would this material be more appropriate for a different repository's collection?
- Does this collection require partnerships with other institutions or campus units to steward responsibly?

COLLECTION HISTORY

Context of Creation

- How was this material created, assembled, and used by the creator(s)?
- What business functions, actions, or activities did this material support or enable?

Custodial History

- What is the custodial history of the collection?
- What actions have been taken on the material since creation (re-boxing, moving, organization, selection, etc.)?

Arrangement

- How is the material currently arranged? Is it arranged in a way that reflects its original use, or has it been rearranged or reordered?
- If material has been moved or reordered, can the donor/seller provide information about how the records were originally maintained or filed?

COLLECTION ASSESSMENT AND NEEDS

Formats

- What formats are included in this collection (and in what volume)?
- If born-digital is included, indicate approximately how much and the most prominent formats and media.
- If A/V is included, indicate approximately how much and what formats.
- If acquisition includes a large amount of printed material to be cataloged, indicate the approximate number of volumes.

Preservation Concerns

- What condition is the collection currently in (evidence of mold, pests, dirt, water damage, etc.)?

Current Storage

- Where is the collection stored? Is it in a climate-controlled space? Is there evidence of dampness, water damage, pests, mold, or other environmental factors that could impact the material?

- How is the collection stored? Is it in boxes? In filing cabinets?
- Is material identified (by folder labels, notes on boxes, etc.)?

Appraisal Decisions

- Which portion(s) of the collection are candidates for acquisition?
- What criteria and rationale have been or will be used for making appraisal decisions both before collection transfer and during processing?
- Which appraisal techniques (sampling, flat file appraisal, etc.) have been or will be used with this acquisition?

Rights and Restrictions

- Will there be any restrictions on this material? Are those restrictions actionable and time-bound? Are restricted materials already separated or easy to identify?
- Rights status: Is the material under copyright? What percentage of copyrighted material was created by the donor/seller? Is the donor/seller planning on licensing material under a creative commons license, licensing them to the repository, or signing copyright over to the repository?
- Does the born-digital material have a high likelihood of containing personally identifiable information (PII)?

OPERATIONAL IMPACT

Operational Impact Report:

- Attach [Operational Impact Report](#)

ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Time

- How long will the material take to process or catalog?
- How does this rank in terms of existing cataloging or processing priorities?
- Would this acquisition change those current priorities or divert staff or other resources from existing planned priorities?

Existing Capacity

- Are current staffing levels, storage spaces, and available equipment and workspaces sufficient to meet the needs of this collection? Are there any timelines, deadlines, or other contingencies that need to be met for this acquisition to move forward?
- Does this acquisition demand significant resources from other units or campus partners (digitization, conservation, etc.) and can they provide those resources?

Risks

- Are there any problems or complications that may affect the decision to acquire?
- Are there any additional donor requirements or conditions placed on the gift?

Proposer's Recommendation

- Why do you recommend this acquisition? Describe strengths, weaknesses, rarity, quality, etc.

Stakeholder(s) Comments

- Comments from other consulted stakeholders such as those responsible for cataloging, processing, conservation, digitization, digital preservation, etc.
- Final Decision:
- Acquisition decision:
- Price (if a purchase):
- Funding strategy:
- Name of authorizer(s):
- Date:

Processing Plan

DESCRIPTION

A document that establishes what work will be done in arranging and describing an archival collection, including identifying likely series, determining processing levels, and estimating the amount of time and effort to be dedicated to the project. It also serves as a record of key decisions about work done on a collection.



HOW TO USE

The processing plan is an important tool for identifying and communicating major arrangement, description, and appraisal actions that a processor should take on a collection. It also serves as a project management tool for estimating the amount of time and effort a processing project is likely to take, identifying who in a repository is responsible for taking which processing actions, and recording significant actions and decisions taken on a collection.

A processing plan can be shared and discussed before a project begins to ensure that all stakeholders in a repository understand and agree on the processing actions that will be taken on a collection and to ensure that those actions support the repository's mission and stated priorities. It supports informed communication and decision-making between the processor, their supervisor, and curators or public services archivists who may have important knowledge about the collection, its creation, or its likely uses.

The processing plan also functions as a work plan, setting forth a plan of action that ensures that all who are involved in processing work are clear about the deadlines, expectations, and key benchmarks for the project. It can also be used to inform cost estimates for budget planning or grant writing activities, or to set appropriate expectations with donors or resource allocators about work and time required to process a collection. Once processing work is complete, the processing plan can be added to the collection file to document the work done on the collection.

ELEMENTS TO INCLUDE OR CONSIDER

- Overview of collection (extent, scope, approximate dates, formats, provenance, and content of creation and use)
- Research value of the collection and its connection to institutional mission
- Level to which each portion of a collection will be processed
- Proposed arrangement, including likely series and subseries for the collection
- Condition of collection and anticipated treatments or housing requirements to stabilize during processing
- Rights status or permissions
- Restrictions
- Appraisal recommendations about series, subseries, material types, or other records that should not be retained
- Time estimate for work on the collection

- Work plan identifying key deadlines, milestones, and sequences of work
- Place to record key processing and appraisal decisions, especially those that deviate from the initial plan

IMPLEMENTATION

Institutions will want to customize the processing plan to serve their staffing, priorities, and workflows. Examples of two processing plans that take different approaches and align with the Total Cost of Stewardship Framework are:

- [Sustainable Heritage Network Processing Plan Form and Levels of Processing Matrix](#)¹⁴
- [New York University Libraries Processing Plan Template and Processing Plan Work Breakdown Template](#)¹⁵

Processing Plan Template

Plan Created By:

Date:

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Collection Information

- Collection title:
- Call number:
- Creator:
- Date range:
- Extent (include A/V and digital media count or estimate, if known):
- Source of acquisition (if separate from creator):
- Accession number(s):
- Individual or department responsible for bringing in collection:

Custodial History

- Describe the custodial history of the accession(s) and any known information about its ownership, storage, or interventions with the collection since creation. Detail who packed and moved the materials.

Rights and Restrictions

- Copyright: if known, detail who owns copyright to the materials in the collection. If unknown, detail when the majority of the collection will pass into the public domain.
- Restrictions: detail any restrictions on access or use of the collection outlined in the deed of gift, potential acquisition report, or related documentation.

COLLECTION OVERVIEW AND ANALYSIS

Abstract

- Draft a brief description of the collection contents and its creator. Detail the important activities of the creator and time period of activity, especially those documented in the collection. At a high level, describe the materials in the collection, the activities they document, how the material was created, assembled, and used by the creator, as well as any business functions, actions, or activities the material supported or enabled.

Research Value, Alignment with Mission and Priorities

- Assess the research strengths of the collection, discuss anticipated use and the research areas it might address. Highlight material that will be especially useful for research, teaching, or exhibition. Address any descriptive or processing actions that should be taken to ensure visibility and usability of especially rich portions of the collection.
- Review any curatorial notes or collections appraisal statements or discuss the collection with the person who was responsible for bringing it in. If the collection was acquired

with the intention of documenting an underdocumented community, helping to diversify collections, or meaningfully fill a gap in the historical record, discuss how your arrangement and description approach will support these goals.

PROCESSING EVALUATION

Current State of Collection

- How is the collection currently organized? Does the current arrangement reflect original order, or has it been re-arranged or re-ordered? Are there natural series or groupings that present themselves?
- How is the collection currently housed? What rehousing work will be necessary?
- Are there any preservation concerns such as dirt, mold, or water damage? Will any remediation be needed? Is a conservation assessment needed for anything in the collection?

Format Needs

- Are there significant amounts of photographic material in the collection, and what is their extent? Are there any condition issues to be addressed? What kind of housing will they require?
- What born-digital formats are included and in what volume? If still on original carriers, is transferring files sufficient to maintain their information, or will disk imaging be necessary and why?
- What A/V formats are present and in what volume? Are there any visible signs of deterioration (sticky shed, warping, vinegar smell)? Do they require rehousing?

Potential Privacy and Sensitivity Issues

- Indicate any potential privacy issues identified in surveying the collection such as sensitive personal material, social security numbers, current bank account information, etc. Identify the extent of the material of concern and where they are in the collection.
- Indicate any groupings of records or documents likely to have medical information and be protected under HIPPA or student records that might be protected under FERPA. Identify where they are in the collection and the extent.
- Indicate any groupings of records or documents that could potentially be classified or protected under attorney-client privilege and/or the work-product doctrine. Identify where they are in the collection and the extent.
- Indicate any portions of the collection with restrictions on access or use outlined in the deed of gift. Identify where they are in the collection and the extent.

Weeding and Appraisal

- Are any portions of the collection candidates for weeding (extensive duplicates, tax documents, receipts, etc.)? Indicate where they are in the collection and estimate extent. Are any portions of the collection candidates for appraisal decisions (i.e., series not of high research value that may be removed or sampled)? Indicate where they are in the collection and estimate extent.

- Review appraisal notes from the curator or acquisitions archivist for the collection. What appraisal decisions did they make, and did they employ any appraisal techniques (sampling, fat file appraisal, etc.) in the process of acquisition? How will this impact your arrangement or descriptive work?

PROCESSING WORK PLAN

Proposed Arrangement

- Detail the proposed arrangement for the collection in outline form. Give title, approximate dates, and linear feet estimate for each series and subseries. For each series and subseries, indicate the level of description (series, box, folder, item, hybrid) it will receive with a brief justification of the chosen approach.

Work Plan

- Provide an overview of the physical arrangement and rehousing work for the entire collection.
- Give detail about any series or subseries level physical arrangement and rehousing work necessary that is not covered in the collection overview.
- For collections with born-digital materials, include an explanation of the imaging or transfer needs and the analysis needed.
- For collections with A/V materials, include an explanation of the physical rehousing work needed. Indicate the proposed level of description and whether this will require viewing or other analysis.
- If any preservation issues were identified in surveying the collection, indicate how they will be addressed.
- Indicate who will work on what sections of the collection and on which activities (arranging, labeling, rehousing, description).
- Estimate the time that work on the collection will take. For large collections, estimate time needed for subsections of the collections. For projects with multiple people performing different tasks, indicate estimated time for that work.
- Develop a timeline to share with stakeholders, identifying project milestones and deliverables and anticipated timeline for meeting these milestones.

Storage and Supplies

- If any portion of the collection will require specialized storage (flat files, cold storage, oversize shelving) after processing, detail the needs and extent of material.
- Estimate the type and quantity of supplies needed to complete processing of the collection. Highlight any odd, oversized, or nonstandard supplies that may need to be ordered.

PROCESSING WORK SUMMARY

Processing Decisions

- Detail any significant processing decisions that lead to a deviation in the originally proposed processing plan and their rationale.
- Detail any weeding, separations, or appraisal undertaken. Note any deaccessioning recommendations or actions taken.

Stakeholder(s) Comments

- Comments from other consulted stakeholders such as processing manager, public services colleagues, curator responsible for bringing in the collection, or other subject matter expert. If this feedback changed the implementation of the processing plan, indicate this above.

Processing Time Comparisons

- Detail actual processing time once the collection was completed. If this varies significantly from the estimated time in the plan, discuss the factors that impacted this variation.

Digitization Project Assessment

DESCRIPTION

A proposal that assesses the viability of a proposed digitization project.



HOW TO USE

The digitization project assessment can help develop, design, and prioritize digitization projects. It can also ensure that a proposed project is aligned with institutional goals, that all parties involved have a shared sense of the scope and purpose of the work, that everyone understands the resources required for success, and that the long-term preservation and access needs are understood.

In many institutions, digitization projects require time, resources, and expertise from multiple people or units, making it even more critical that all parties have a shared sense of purpose and understanding of responsibilities across a workflow. The digitization project assessment can serve as a communications tool among administrators allocating resources, those responsible for suggesting digitization initiatives, and those responsible for doing the imaging and transfer, preservation, systems, and technical services work involved in a digitization project. An assessment can be used by whatever decision-making body approves and prioritizes digitization projects at an institution, as well as to prepare grant proposals or discuss costs with resource allocators or communicate with collection donors about the resources necessary to digitize their collection.

Proposals are often used in coordination with a digitization selection criteria policy, which can help to guide consistent and mission-driven decisions. Assessments are usually intended for use in institution-driven digitization projects rather than one-off, researcher-driven digitization requests. An abbreviated version of the assessment can be used as a proposal form to gather initial information from colleagues who would like to suggest material for digitization.

ELEMENTS TO INCLUDE OR CONSIDER

- Details about the materials to be digitized (title/collection name, extent, date range, holding repository, or collection)
- Project goals, objectives, and anticipated audience
- Physical condition of material and necessary stabilization, handling, or equipment required to safely complete digitization
- Rights status of material
- Privacy concerns
- Research value of the material
- Potential to advance the mission of the institution or support other institutional priorities such as documenting underrepresented communities
- External stakeholders or motivators (Is digitization required by a deed of gift or supporting an institution-wide initiative?)
- Uniqueness of content, relationship to digital projects at other institutions
- Confirmation that the material is not already digitized and available elsewhere

- Sufficiency of existing metadata
- Assessment of resources required to digitize (including staff time for digitizing, metadata creation, rights review, physical preparation, and conservation treatments)
- Any deadlines that need to be met, such as an anniversary, or dependencies such as the completion of processing that may impact the project timeline
- Requirements of external partners or funders
- Requirements for final deliverables (file size, file type, etc.)
- Post-processing requirements (OCR, closed captioning, etc.)
- Access system used to make final project available and additional access requirements or restrictions that will be required
- Preservation plan for digital assets produced
- Preservation plan or sunseting plan for digital projects

IMPLEMENTATION

Institutions will want to customize the digitization project proposal to serve their workflows, staffing, and priorities. Proposals are often used in coordination with a digitization selection criteria policy, which can help to identify what criteria should be considered in a proposal. An example of a selection policy that aligns with the Total Cost of Stewardship Framework is:

[Dartmouth Library Selection Policy for Digitization Projects](#).¹⁶

Digitization Project Assessment Template

Proposed By:

Date:

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Project Sponsor

- Name the project sponsor and role they expect to play on the project. The sponsor is a staff member who develops the initial project proposal, identifies goals for the project, and who works with the [team name] to implement it. They may also be responsible for developing a communication and outreach plan, reporting and budget monitoring for grant projects, and communication with other external stakeholders.

Material to be Digitized

- Identify the material to be digitized, including call number or another relevant identifier. If only a portion of a collection is to be digitized, describe that portion. Estimate date coverage and extent.

Project Scope

- Give a brief overview of the scope of the project, including desired outcomes and deliverables, and expectations for description, access, and preservation.

Audience

- Identify a specific audience for the project: who you expect will be significant or sustained users.

RESEARCH AND INSTITUTIONAL VALUE ANALYSIS

Purpose and Goals:

- How does this material fulfill the stated goals in the collection development policy? Does the material represent a recognized strength of our collections?
- How would digitizing this collection help support our mission or institutional priorities?
- Does this collection document an underdocumented community, help to diversify our collections, or meaningfully fill a gap in the historical record?

Research Value:

- Discuss anticipated value of digital access to this material.
- What are the use statistics from related collections over the past five years? Is there evidence of significant use from researchers outside the institution who might benefit from digital access?
- Would digitization provide surrogate access to fragile original materials? Is reformatting required for ongoing use?
- Would digitization open new avenues of research or enable new research methodologies?

Relationship to Other Collections:

- Would digitizing these materials offer the opportunity to virtually reunite a fonds or otherwise connect geographically dispersed original documents?
- Are the same or similar materials already digitized and available online?
- Is there a similar project elsewhere? If so, how would this project be different from or enhance existing work?

Rights and Restrictions on Access

- Detail who owns copyright to the materials in the collection or if they are in the public domain. If the materials are under copyright but the project is permitted by fair use, please explain.
- Detail any restrictions on access or use of the collection outlined in the deed of gift, release form, or other agreements.
- Indicate any potential privacy issues identified in surveying the collection such as sensitive personal material, social security numbers, current bank account information, etc.
- Indicate any documents that might have medical information and be protected under HIPAA, or student records that might be protected under FERPA. Identify the extent of materials of concern and where they are in the collection.
- Indicate any documents that could potentially be classified or protected under attorney-client privilege and/or the work-product doctrine, how they would be addressed within the project, or if this would require further research/analysis.
- Indicate any documents that may be culturally or ethically sensitive, and how they would be respectfully treated within the project, or if this would require further research/analysis.

PROJECT NEEDS AND WORK ANALYSIS

Current State of the Collection:

- Describe the formats and extent of the material to be digitized.
- Describe the condition of materials and any other relevant information about physical characteristics, housing, or material that might impact digitization work.
- Describe any conservation work that will need to be performed prior to beginning digitization.
- Describe or provide any existing metadata or description for the collection, such as finding aids, databases, spreadsheets, as well as the degree of processing and control.

Project Requirements:

- Describe the formats and extent of the material to be digitized.
- Describe any additional outputs beyond digitization required by the project, such as Optical Character Recognition (OCR), transcriptions, closed captioning, etc.
- Describe the condition of materials, and any other relevant information about physical characteristics, housing, or material that might require stabilization work in order to perform digitization or impact workflow or equipment.
- Indicate if existing metadata will need to be revised or enhanced to support digitization. Will this metadata be licensed for open sharing or available to metadata aggregators?

- Describe access requirements for the collection, including the system you anticipate will provide access and any access restrictions that will need to be in place.

Work Assessment:

- Does the institution have the equipment necessary to digitize the material or would it need to be sent to a vendor?
- Can the institution fulfill the access needs of the project with current infrastructure, or would it require additional development or systems work?
- Can the collection be digitized in its current physical state, or would it require physical remediation, rehousing, or reorganization?
- Is the existing descriptive metadata sufficient for the access and digitization goals of the project, or would additional descriptive work be necessary?
- Can the institution provide digital preservation for the outputs of this project, or would it require additional development or capacity of digital preservation systems?

External Dependencies:

- Are there additional institutional commitments to or interest in this project?
- Are we obligated to undertake this project via deed of gift or another contract?
- Is there any funding to support this project?
- Are there any reporting or budget tracking requirements associated with the funding?

Time Constraints:

- Indicate any time constraints or deadlines associated with the project or any events or anniversaries the project's completion should coincide with.

Project Timeline and Costs:

- What is the overall timeline and cost estimate for this project?
- Would undertaking this project divert staff, equipment, or other resources from other ongoing or project-based work?

ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Date Reviewed

- Date reviewed:
- Reviewed by:

Outcome

- Is the proposed project determined to be feasible, possibly feasible, or not feasible? If possibly feasible or not feasible, indicate what areas would need to be addressed for the project to become feasible.

Stakeholder(s) Comments

- Insert comments from other consulted stakeholders such as experts in cataloging, processing, conservation, digitization, digital preservation, etc.

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For more information about our work related to digitizing library collections, please visit: **oclc.org/digitizing**



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