

Understanding Archives: An Introduction to Archival Basics

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CONSERVATION
CENTER
for Art & Historic Artifacts

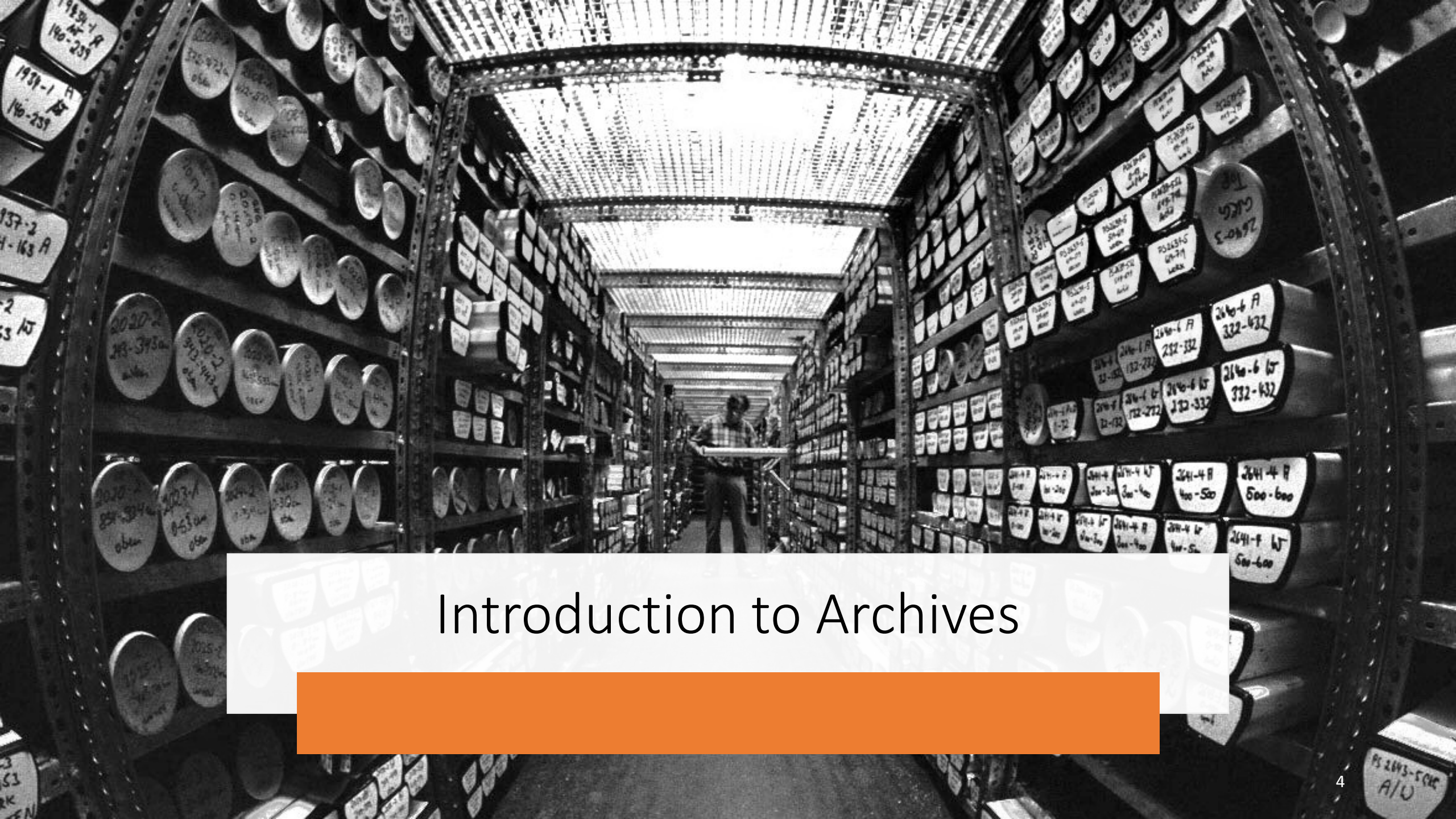
Building Capacity HBCU, a five-year program of the HBCU Library Alliance, has been generously provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities

Paper conservation lab with lots of other functions

In a typical year:

- Preservation Services specialists complete over 50 survey projects.
- Approximately 60 CCAHA-sponsored workshops, conferences, webinars, and training sessions are presented.
- The Digital Imaging Services staff digitizes thousands of pages of fragile archival documents, books, and photographs.
- Conservators assess and treat more than 6,000 individual artifacts, from over 400 clients.
- Housing & Framing Services house approx. 75% of the artifacts treated (folder, sleeve, box, mat and frame, or sealed package).





Introduction to Archives



Understanding Archives

- Overview
 - Key Terms and Concepts
- Defining Your Collections
- Appraisal
- Acquisition
- Accessioning
- Documentation
- Processing
 - Arrangement
 - Housing Basics
 - Description – Finding Aids

Identify

Organize

Make accessible



Key Terms & Concepts

Provenance

dictates that the records of one person or organization are not to be mixed with records of another person or organization

Repository

any type of organization that holds documents, including business, institutional, and government archives, manuscript collections, libraries, museums, and historical societies

Original Order

the organization and sequence of records established by the creator of the records; strive to maintain in all collections

Collection

group of material with some unifying characteristic – a person, family group, corporate body, or subject either from a common source or as a natural product of activity or function

(a selection of)

Essential Policies and Procedures

Collection
Development
Policy

Exhibition
Policy

Collection
Management
Policy

Mission
Statement

Handling &
Access
Guidelines

Housekeeping
Policies

Strategic
Plan

Emergency
Preparedness
& Response
Plan

Processing
&
Cataloging
Manual

Preservation
Plan

Mission Statement

WHAT you are working in

HOW you do the work

WHY you do the work

A good Mission Statement should contain minimal jargon and easily explains the work of the organization in a succinct manner.

Mission Statements should be reviewed regularly -
“touchstone, not an unchanging cornerstone”





Collection Development Policy

- Defines nature and extent of your archival activity.
- Guides the institution in selecting materials that the repository will acquire, typically identifying the scope of creators, subjects, formats, and other characteristics that influence the selection process.
- Ensures collections have a coherent and well-defined focus.



Areas to address in your Collection Development Policy:

- Needs
 - Specify what you'd like to add to the collections
- Limits What won't be collected
- and Overlaps
- Collecting Philosophy
 - Obtaining the materials in your needs
 - Resources
- Space, finances, staffing
- Formats

Sample Policy: <https://www.amherst.edu/library/archives/collectiondevelopment>

Appraisal

The process of determining if materials have sufficient value to be accessioned into a repository. This does not refer to placing a monetary value on the materials.



Intellectual Value

- Evidential
- Informational

Intrinsic Value

Other Considerations

- Administrative
- Age
- Condition
- Accessibility

Ethical Considerations

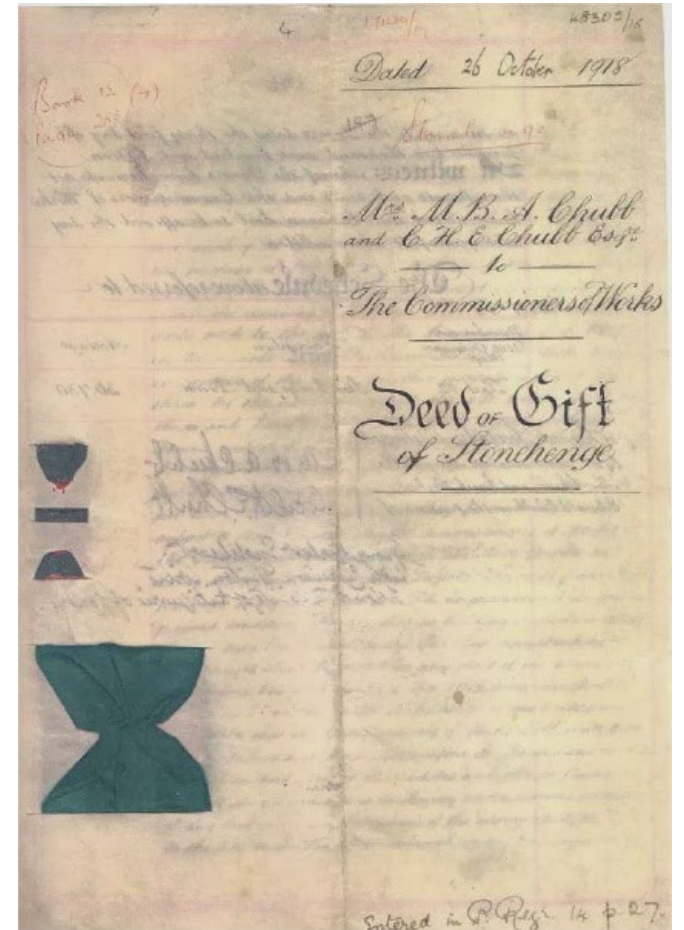
Acquisition

Transfers the records to the custody of your repository, intellectually and physically.

Deed of Gift

The formal, legal, agreement that transfers ownership of, and legal rights in, the materials to be donated. Elements of a deed of gift include:

- Name of the donor and the recipient
- Title and description of the materials donated
- Transfer of ownership
- Access to the Collection
- Transfer of Intellectual Property Rights
- Separations
- Signatures



Accessioning

(noun) Materials physically and legally transferred to a repository as a unit at a single time.

(verb) To take legal and physical custody of a group of records or other materials and to formally document their receipt.

Deaccessioning

The formal act which allows an institution to remove permanently from its holdings items deemed no longer to be of archival value, or within the repository's collection policy.

SAA Technical Subcommittee Guidelines for Reappraisal and Deaccessioning:

<http://www2.archivists.org/groups/technical-subcommittee-on-guidelines-for-reappraisal-and-deaccessioning-ts-grd/guidelines-for-reappraisal-and-deaccession>

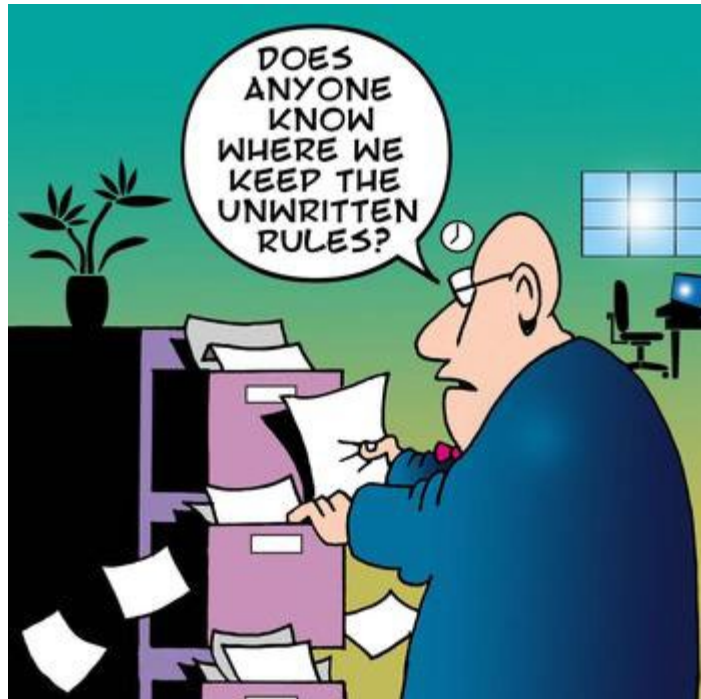


[Accession, George Oates](#)

Elements of an Accession Record

- **Unique Accession ID number**
- **Name of collection or record group**
- **Creator or originator of collection**
- **Date of acquisition**
- **Source of acquisition**
- **Extent**
- Any restrictions and terms of use
- Scope and content
- Type of media (prints, negatives, slides, etc.)
- Storage location(s) with exact quantity of containers

Documentation



[PEX Network Cartoons](#)

- Society of Georgia Archivists Forms Forum
 - <http://soga.org/resource/forms>
- Standards & Best Practices Resource Guide, SAA Museum Section
 - <http://www2.archivists.org/groups/museum-archives-section/standards-best-practices-resource-guide>

What is a Record?

A complete record is:

- Fixed – information is permanent
- Contextual – meaning and value comes from the context in which they were created, used, and maintained
- Organic – the natural output of work
- Unique

A complete record has:

- Content
- Context
 - In the record
 - In the relationship of one record to another
 - In the activity which led to the creation of the record
- Structure
 - Physical format
 - Relationship between informational elements

Context

Daily Living
Education
Work/Business
Play
Leisure
Social Participation



Records – items generated as the result of routine activities or transactions, especially those of an organization



Papers – documents created in a more informal situation, usually by an individual



- Office records
- Faculty records
- Professional records
- Personal records
- Primary resources support scholarship and they are made accessible through finding aids.

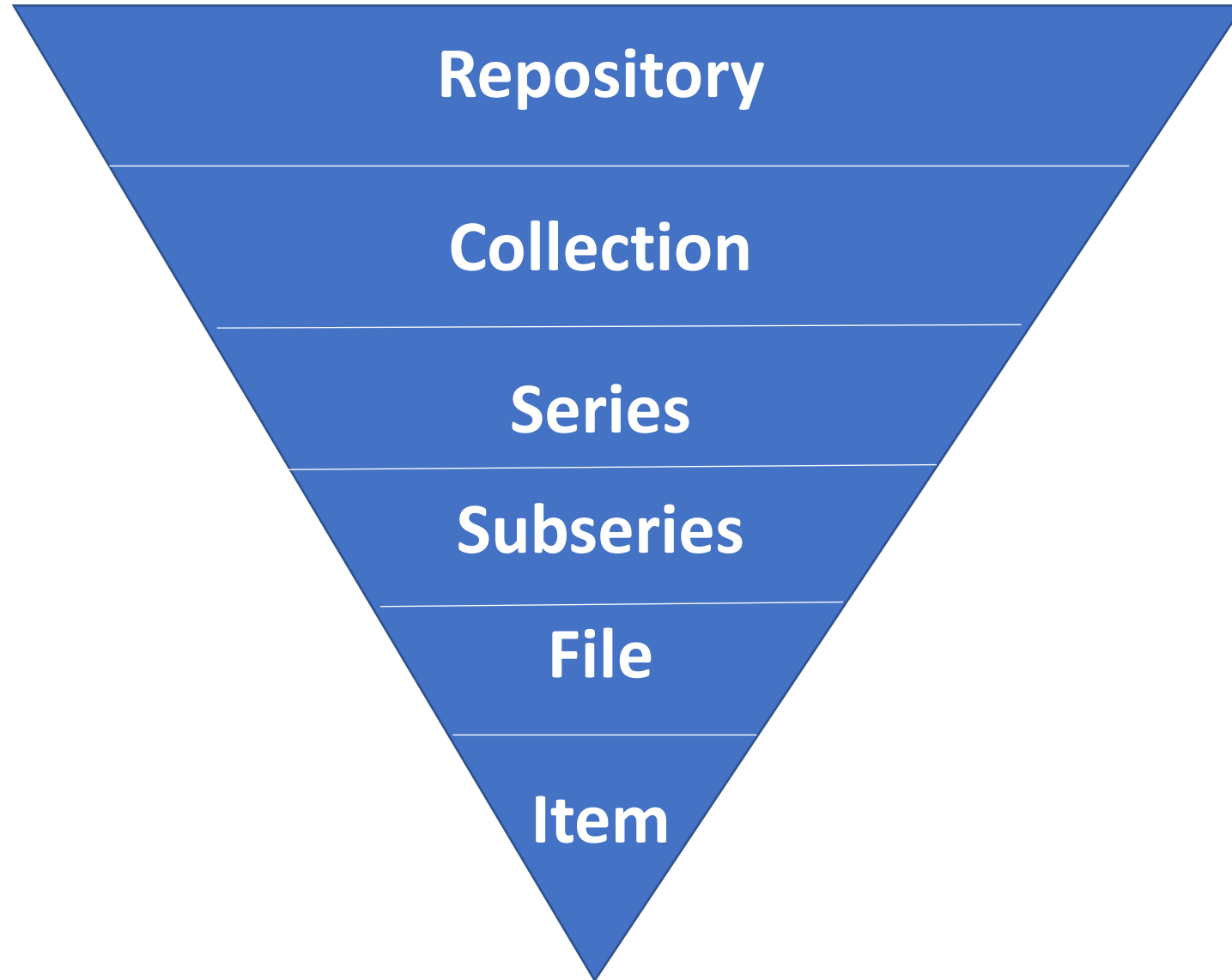
Provenance

“All documents which come from a body, an establishment, a family, or an individual form a fonds, and must be kept together.” Natalis de Wailly 1841

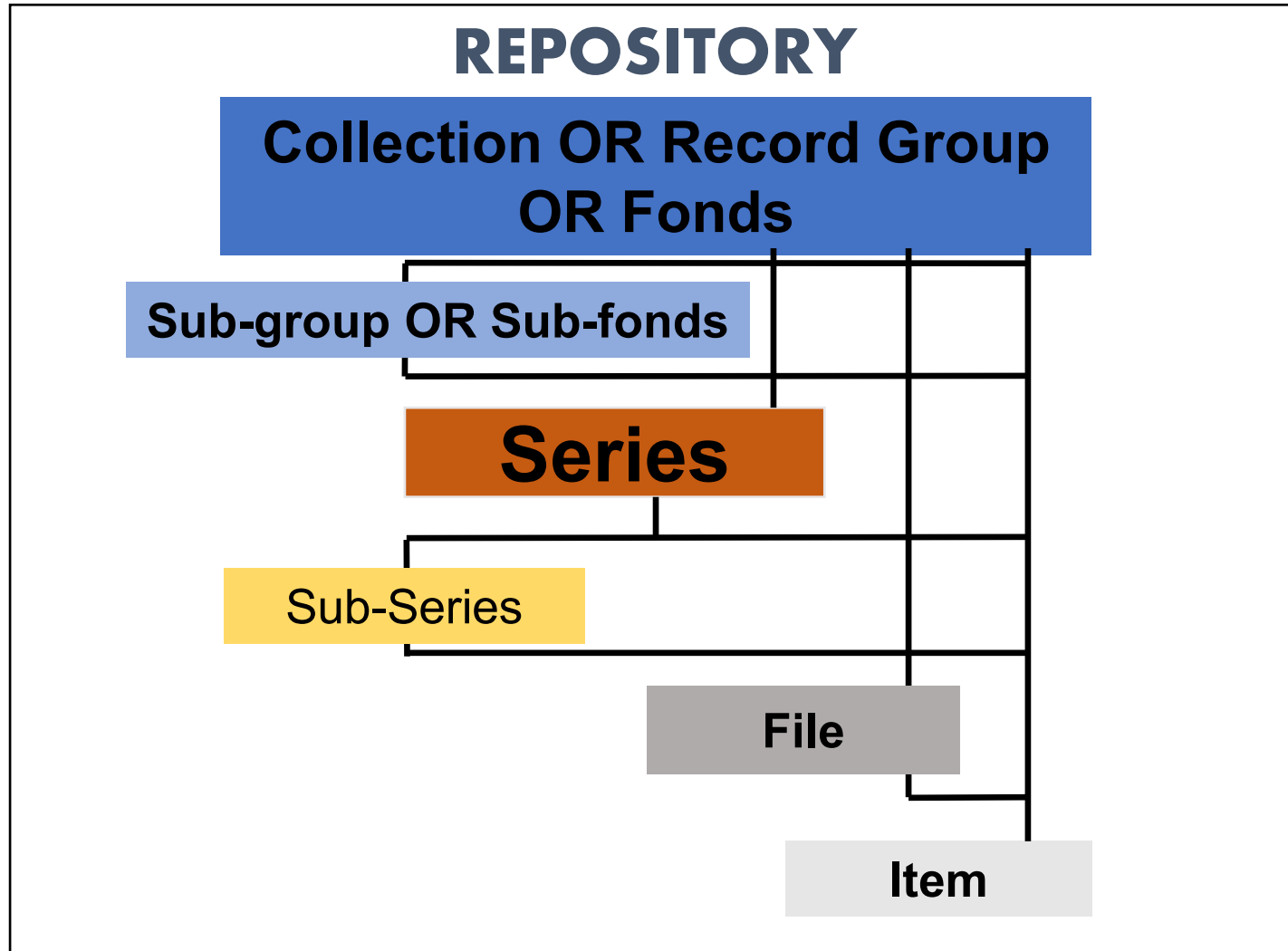
Original Order

- **The organization and sequence of records established by the creator of the records**
- Preserves existing relationships and evidential significance that can be inferred from the context of the records.
- It is not necessarily the order in which materials were received.
- Respect for original order does not extend to respect for original disorder.

Levels of Arrangement



Hierarchy of Arrangement



Levels of Arrangement

Repository

Sassafras Historical Society

Collection

Smythe Family Papers, 1932-1965

Series

Poetry

File

Poems, 1945-1961

Item

Poem for My Dog, 1955

Series

Photographs

File

Photographs, 1941-1945

File

Photographs, 1946-1950

Repository

Any type of organization that holds documents, including business, institutional, and government archives, manuscript collections, libraries, museums, and historical societies.

Collection

A group of material with some unifying characteristic – a person, family group, corporate body, or subject either from a common source or as a natural product of activity or function.

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. Can be divided into sub-series.

Common format-based series:

- Diaries/Journals
- Correspondence
- Photographs
- Audiotapes
- Videotapes
- Clippings

Common function-based series:

- Legal papers
- Business papers
- Personal papers
- Genealogical papers

File

A group of documents related by use or topic, typically housed in a folder (or a group of folders for a large file).

Item

Smallest archival unit. An individual document or manuscript that can be distinguished from a group in that it is complete in itself.

Presbyterian Historical Society

A.L. Edmiston Papers, 1908 -1975 (bulk 1914 - 1941)

SERIES II: CORRESPONDENCE, 1910-1948

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 6 | 1 | Correspondence to the Executive Committee of Foreign Missions, 1910-1920 |
| 6 | 2 | Correspondence from the Executive Committee of Foreign Missions, 1910-1926 |
| 6 | 3 | Correspondence related to Rev. and Mrs. Edmiston's mission work in Congo, 1911, 1920 |
| 6 | 4 | Correspondence to missionaries, 1910-1932 |
| 6 | 5 | Correspondence from missionaries, 1918-1948 |
| 6 | 6 | "Dear Friends" letter upon death of Althea Brown Edmiston, 1937 |
| 6 | 7 | Correspondence from Belgian government, 1932 |
| 6 | 8 | Correspondence, postcards to friends, 1910, 1920 |
| 6 | 9 | Correspondence, postcards from friends, 1910-1921 |

More Product, Less Process



*Redefining the
expectations of processing*

More Product, Less Process (MPLP)

- Description is time consuming
 - MPLP encourages flexibility - apply different levels of processing to collections, or parts of collections.
- "MPLP, fundamentally, is not about specific processing actions. It is about **resource management...**"
- Processing is an iterative activity

The Process of Processing

- Focus on one collection at a time.
- Familiarize yourself with the collection.
- Survey the collection.
- Determine the series.
- Physically arrange the collection into series, maintaining original order where possible.
- Arrange the materials in the series into an intellectual manner, maintaining original order where possible.
- Determine the order of the series and number them.



Survey the collection

- Look at the collection
 - Don't move anything!
 - Use information on boxes and folders
 - Look for administrative or biographical records
- Create a Collection File
 - Deed of Gift
 - Accession Records
 - Donor interviews
 - Research notes
- Look at the collection as a whole
 - How was the collection received?
 - Who or what is the collection about?
 - Do you have everything you are supposed to have?
- Describe what is in each box
- Identify any groups you see within the collection
- Basic Research



Archival Arrangement

“Arrangement is the intellectual and/or physical process of organizing documents in accordance with accepted archival principles, as well as the results of these processes” (DACS)

Arrange the Collection

- Original Order, let the collection guide you.
- Look at the groups you identified in previous steps
 - Dig deeper, look closer
 - Do your groups still make sense?
- What if there is no original order?
 - Impose order. Use subject matter or material type.
 - Think like a researcher.
- Identify possible series names
 - Archival collections are arranged hierarchically.
 - Groups of materials can be arranged by topic, time period, type of record, or material.
 - Subseries are groups of materials within a series.
 - Series and subseries are not required.



Physical Arrangement

Rehousing records as necessary

Identify preservation needs

Separate special formats

Weed materials





Preservation Housing

Appropriate materials:

Acid-free

Lignin-free

Buffered

Photographs should be stored in materials that have passed the Photograph Activity Test (PAT).

Items are housed in appropriately sized enclosures.

Don't over- or under-stuff your boxes!

Collections should be stored 4-6" off of the ground.



Housing and Preservation



- Protect materials by minimizing chemical and physical deterioration and damage.
- Minimize the loss of information and to extend the life of cultural property.

Labeling

Folders:

Collection Name

Collection Number (Call Number)

Folder Title and Dates

Box Number

Boxes:

Collection Name

Collection Number (Call
Number)

Contents

Box Number (1 of X)

Housing: Folders

- Determine conventions for your repository and specific collections
 - Folder titles
 - Dates
 - Collection codes
- Don't over stuff folders
- Don't number folders until the end
- Review folder titles

Payne

II. Personal Papers; diaries, 1904-1962

TPN Box1; 8



Describing Collections

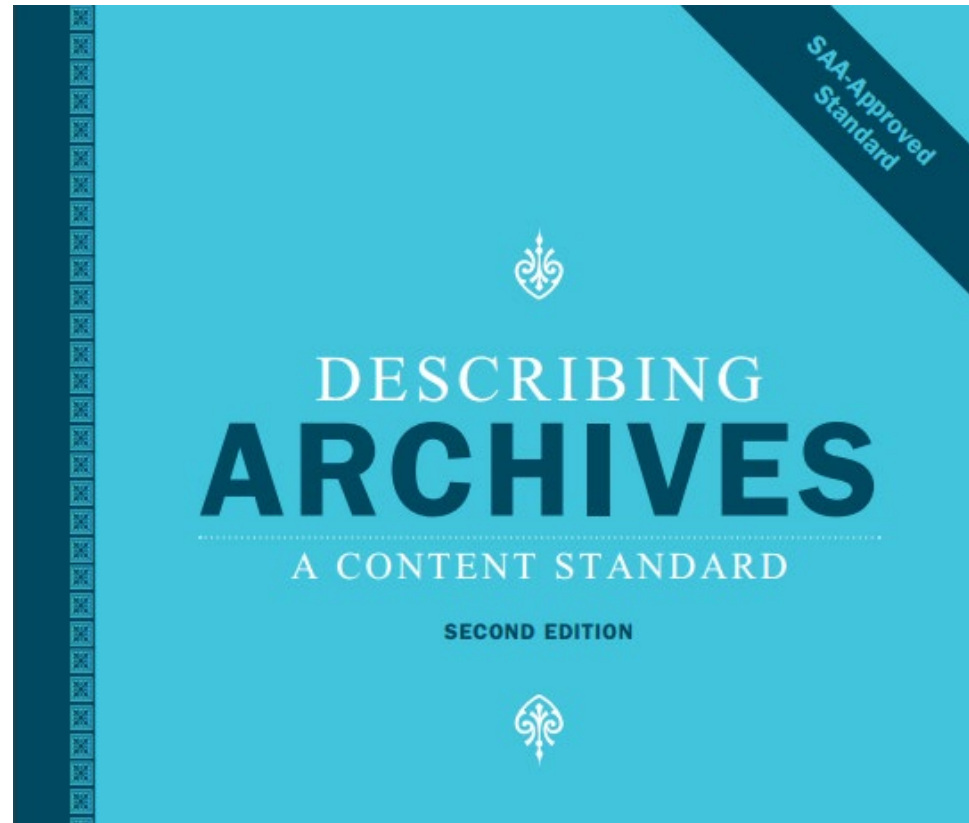


Description

Process of creating a tool for accessing collections and serves as a guide to potential users of the collection

Finding Aid

A single document that places the materials in context by consolidating information about the collection.



Describing Archives: A Content Standard
(DACS)

Available as a PDF download or to read online at:

http://files.archivists.org/pubs/DACS2E-2013_v0315.pdf

<https://www2.archivists.org/standards/DACS>

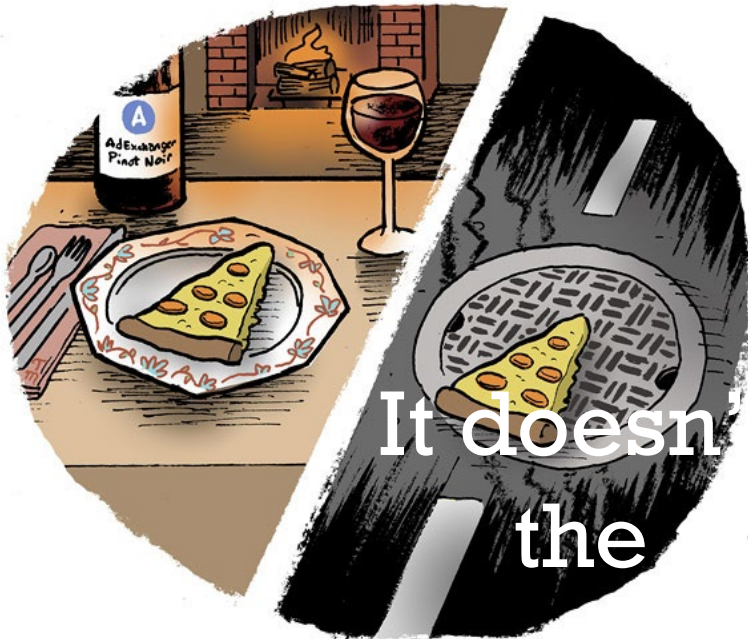
Good description *guides*

Representation to facilitate discovery

Evaluation

Aggregate description

Context!



It doesn't
the

Context Matters

EASTMAN MUSEUM CALENDAR FILMS BLOG STORE

ABOUT | VISIT | **COLLECTIONS** | EXHIBITIONS | EVENTS | LEARN | JOIN & GIVE |

LEO HURWITZ COLLECTION, 1910-1992

Leo Hurwitz collection, 1910-1992, bulk 1925-1991

[DOWNLOAD PDF](#) [VIEW EAD/XML](#)

Finding aid created by Stacey Doyle, Ken Fox, and Nancy Kauffman, George Eastman Museum, Moving Image Department, March 2016

Contents

- [Descriptive Summary](#)
- [Biographical Note](#)
- [Scope and Content Note](#)
- [Arrangement of the Collection and Series List](#)
- [Access Terms](#)
- [Preferred Citation](#)
- [Related Collections](#)
- [Container List Arranged by Series](#)

Descriptive Summary

Creator: Hurwitz, Leo, 1909-1991

Title: Leo Hurwitz collection

Dates: 1910-1992, bulk 1925-1991

Physical Extent: 89.5 cubic feet

Repository:
Moving Image Department

ArchivesUM Finding Aids at the University of Maryland

Archives UM Home | Special Collections | Search | About ArchivesUM | Help

Papers of the Brooke Family

Overview

Title: Papers of the Brooke Family
Author/Creator: Brooke Family
Collection No: 80-3
Size: 13.00 linear feet
Inclusive Dates: 1750-1980
Bulk Dates: 1860-1954
Repository: Archives and Manuscripts Department, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742. Tel: 301-405-9058, Fax: 301-314-2709, Email: archives-um@umd.edu
Abstract: The Brooke Family was a large family of landowners in Maryland. The collection documents family life on the plantation "Falling Green." The Brooke and Farquhar families were prominent in the Sandy Spring, Montgomery County, Maryland. The collection includes correspondence, journals, a scrapbook, business records, poetry, sketches, printed ephemera, and history transcripts.

Important Information for Users of the Collection

Restrictions: There are no restricted files in this collection.
Preferred Citation: Papers of the Brooke Family, Special Collections, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742.
Publication Rights: Photocopies of original materials may be provided. Please see our [Duplication of Materials](#) policy for more information. Questions regarding the status of materials within this collection should be directed to the appropriate staff member.

Historical Note

The members of the Brooke family arrived in colonial Maryland poised to establish a plantation (1692-1695), a former Anglican minister, emigrated from England.

Table of Contents

- Overview
- Historical Note
- Scope and Contents of the Collection
- Processing Information
- Arrangement (Includes Series Descriptions)
- Box Inventory
- Series I: Day Books
- Series II: Correspondence
- Series III: Manuscripts and Printed Materials
- Series IV: Business and Legal Records
- Series V: Oral Histories
- Series VI: Memorabilia
- Series VII: Photographs
- Related Materials

Contact Information

ArchivesUM
University of Maryland
College Park, MD 20742
Tel: 301-405-9058
Fax: 301-314-2709
Contact Us

Required Elements of a Finding Aid

- Unique Number (Reference Code/Call Number)
- Name and Location of Repository
- Collection Title
- Date
- Extent
- Name of Creator(s) (If known)
- Languages
- Scope and Content Note
- Conditions Governing Access
- Biographical / Historical Note (*Not required, but considered Optimum Description*)

DACS: <https://saa-ts-dacs.github.io/>

Additional Elements of a Finding Aid (Added Value)

- Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use
- Arrangement Note / Processing Information Note
- Custodial History / Immediate Source of Acquisition
- Related Materials
- Separated Materials Note
- Inventory / Container List
- *Plus many more!*

Controlled Access Headings

- Selected using a controlled vocabulary to ensure that only one term represents a concept.

- Corporate Names
- Geographic Names
- Personal Names
- Subjects



Library of Congress Subject Headings:

<http://id.loc.gov/authorities/subjects.html>

Sample Finding Aids

Presbyterian Historical Society

<http://www.history.pcusa.org/collections/findingaids/>

Richard B. Russell Library/University of Georgia

<http://russelldoc.galib.uga.edu/russell/search?browse-title=first;sort=title>

Pennsylvania Area Consortium of Special Collection Libraries Finding Aids Database

<http://dla.library.upenn.edu/dla/pacscl/index.html>

New York University Libraries

<https://specialcollections.library.nyu.edu/search/>



[Reading, TheGlantVermin](#)

Access

“It is the responsibility of a repository to make available original research materials in its possession on equal terms of access. Access to all research materials, irrespective of format, should be provided in accordance with a clearly defined and publicized institutional access policy, the “Code of Ethics for Archivists,” the “ACRL Code of Ethics for Special Collections Librarians” and this Joint Statement.”

**ALA/SAA Joint Statement on
Access to Research Materials
in Archives and Special
Collections Libraries**

- Online Access
- Researcher Access
 - Register (with ID)
 - Fill out call slips for collections
 - Use only pencil
 - Check coats and bags
 - Limited number of boxes at once

Archival Associations and Continuing Education

- **Society of American Archivists (SAA)**
 - <http://www.archivists.org/>
- **Academy of Certified Archivists (ACA)**
 - <http://www.certifiedarchivists.org/>
- **Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference**
 - <https://marac.info>
- **Regional Archival Associations Consortium**
 - <https://www2.archivists.org/groups/regional-archival-associations-consortium-raac>

Questions

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Reminder:

Q&A Session tomorrow,
February 22, at 10am EST.