

# Technical Services and Special Collections Partners in Processing

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## Introduction

The Technical Services Team at the University of Arizona Libraries is incorporating archival processing into its ongoing work responsibilities. Members of the Technical Services Team (TST), working with the Special Collections Processing Archivist and Digital Archivist, are doing physical processing and will be trained to encode finding aids. During a recent reorganization TST was asked to partner with Special Collections. There are several benefits to this partnership:

- Staff once trained can grow competencies over time
- Reduction in time spent training students
- It would draw on existing expertise
- Having a cadre of permanent staff trained would provide the flexibility to handle high priority projects as they arise
- The backlog could be reduced

TST formed an internal group called the Archival Processing Group. This group has gone through training; established a workflow; established communication and documentation practices; defined quality standards and created a competencies list.

## Staffing

- 8 Technical Services Team paraprofessionals
  - Devote 30% of their time until trained; 15% thereafter
- 1 Metadata Librarian
  - Acts as a coordinator for the technical services paraprofessionals
- Work with a Processing Archivist and a Digital Archivist



## Training

- A session with a guest archivist which included a brief introduction to archives and a hands-on exercise in arrangement
- TST members completed The American Association for State and Local History The Basics of Archives Online Workshop <http://www.aaslh.org/workshop.htm>
- The Processing Archivist provided a processing manual
- Processing pairs were assigned a 1-2 LF collection
- Each pair went through a two-hour session with the Processing Archivist to go over the procedures in the manual using their assigned collection as an example
- Each pair completed processing their collection consulting the Processing Archivist as needed

## Workflow

1. Processing Archivist identifies collections to be processed
2. TST coordinator assigns processors
3. Processing Archivist sends processors an Accession Report
4. Processors do initial survey of the collection
5. Processors complete a Processing Proposal and submit it to the Processing Archivist for approval
6. Processors do physical processing: arrange, house, label
7. Processors create a Finding Aid
8. Finding Aid is reviewed and approved by the Processing Archivist
9. Processors create a Statistics report
10. Once training occurs processors will encode the finding aid

## Communication and Documentation

- The Archival Processing Group meets once a month
- A written report of the Group's progress is submitted once a month
- For each collection an Accession Report, Processing Proposal, Finding Aid and Statistics Report is kept
- A spreadsheet is used to processing track assignments
- The Processing Archivist provides TST with a priority list of collections to be processed from

## Quality Standards

Two tentative quality standards have been developed. These will be evaluated and adjusted as the Archival Processing Group gains knowledge of the processing and encoding work by doing it. The tentative quality standards are:

- 100% of bibliographic records for archival collections will be available to library customers within one week of completion of the finding aid.
- 100% of EAD records for archival collections under 25 linear feet will be written, proofed and posted to Arizona Archives Online within 2 weeks of assignment.



## Competency Development

A list of competencies was developed cover 3 areas: arrangement, description and encoding. For each area entry and mastery level behaviors were described. An example is below:

CATEGORY  
Arrangement

DEFINITION  
Organization of the collection from the initial survey to the re-housing.

BEHAVIORAL DESCRIPTION  
ENTRY LEVEL  
Ability to survey collection and develop a processing plan  
Basic knowledge of Archival Principles.  
Knowledge of proper Handling of Materials  
Ability to write clearly  
Establish intellectual hierarchies  
Ability to lift minimum of 20 lbs  
Ability to re-house and label materials according to scheme  
Ability to communicate and interact with archivist and other processors effectively  
Report progress and barriers

MASTERY LEVEL  
Ability to identify preservation needs of materials in collections  
Ability to identify and solve problems in arrangement as they arise  
Ability to appraise material for enduring value