You Want Me to Do What Now?!

Tackling the Digital Backlog through Reorganization, Collaboration, and Redefining Traditional Roles
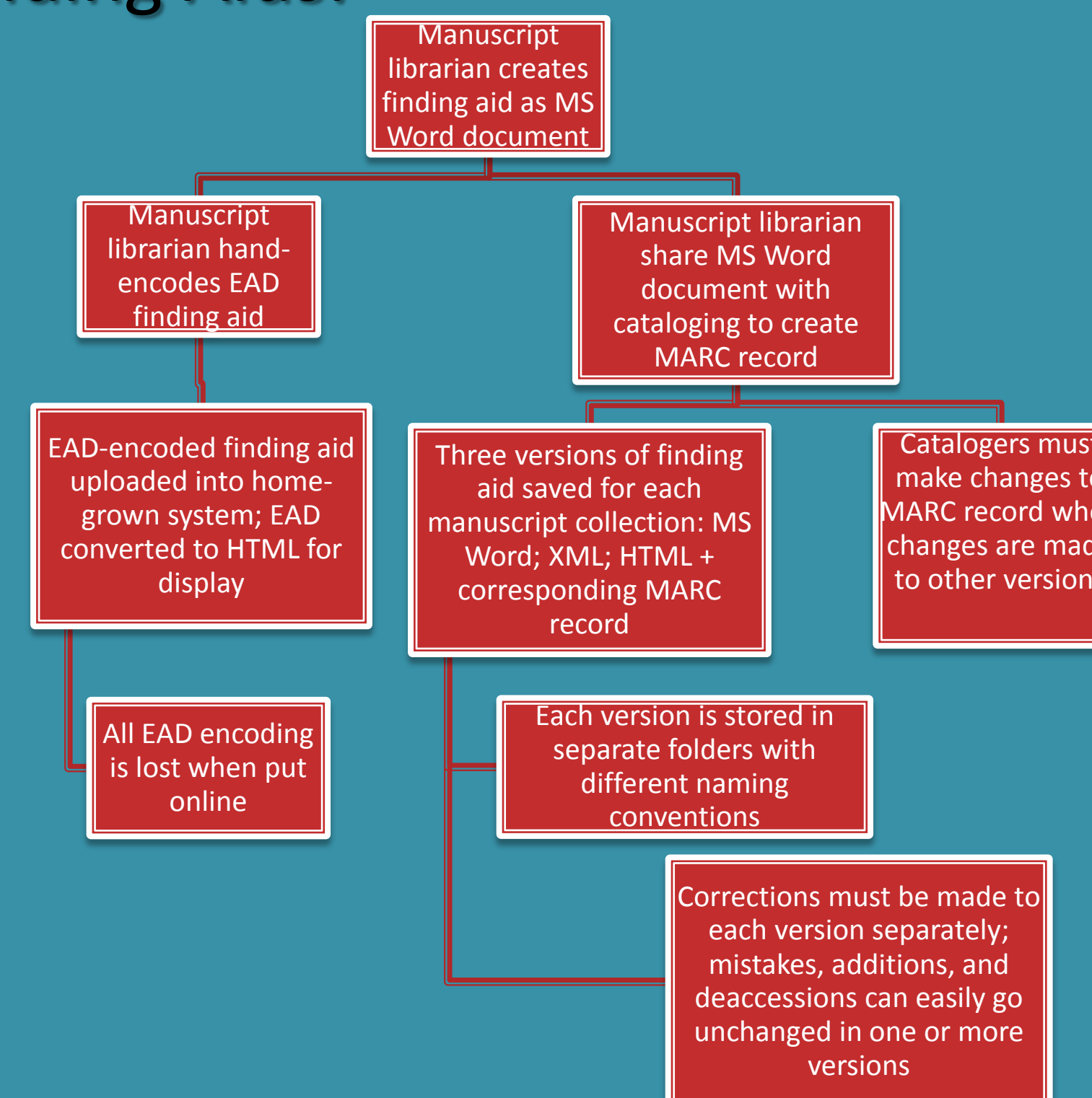
SUMMARY

Archivists and librarians at **J. Murrey Atkins Library Special Collections** at **UNC Charlotte** were challenged to find innovative, efficient solutions to effectively manage the digital backlog (including digital finding aids, digital images, and oral histories) and hidden collections created in the past decade.
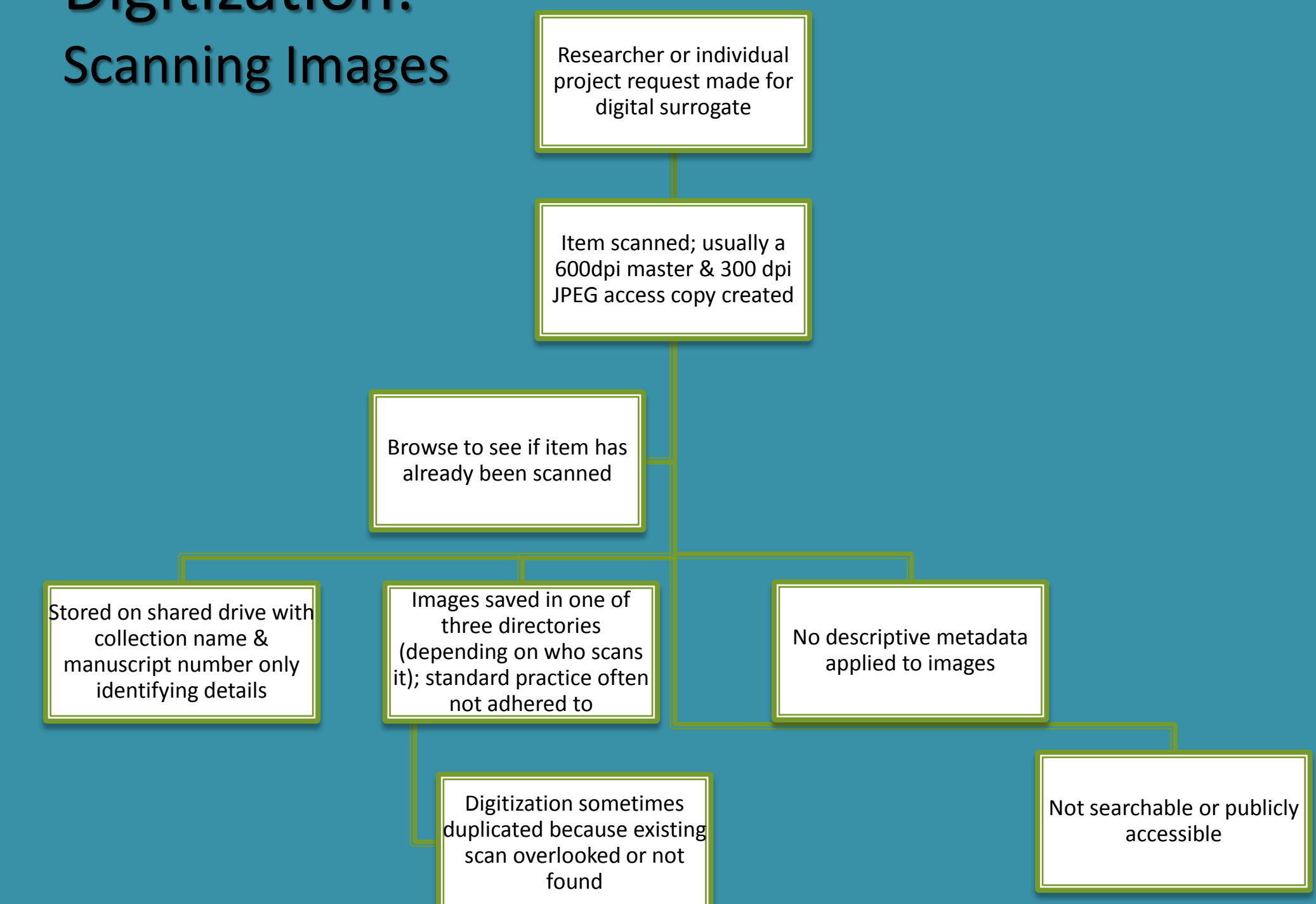
The unique training and workflow procedures devised at Atkins Special Collections can serve as a model for other repositories that seek to refocus and expand upon the professional efforts of existing staff while also providing comprehensive access to previously hidden rare and unique materials.

Old Workflows
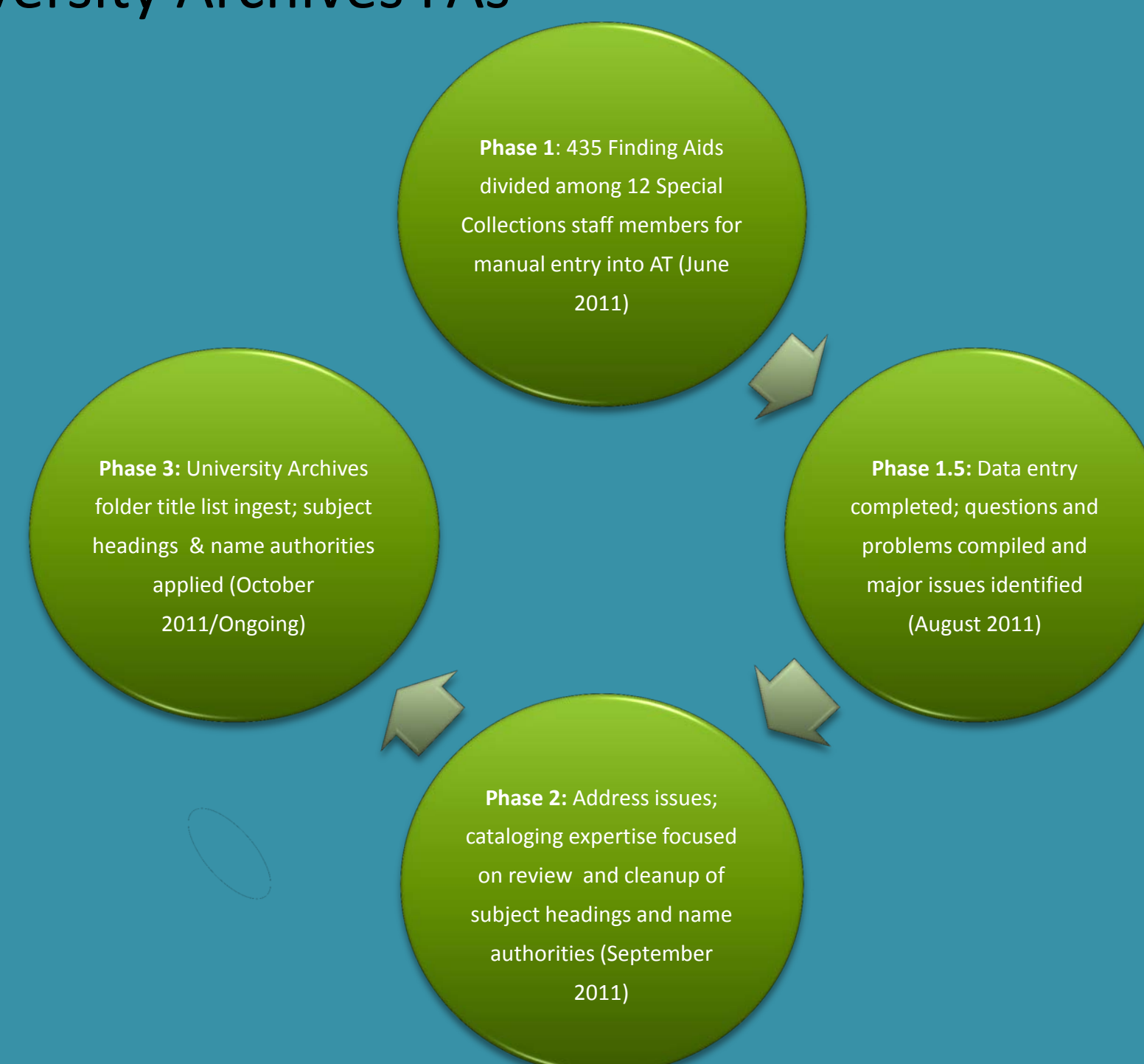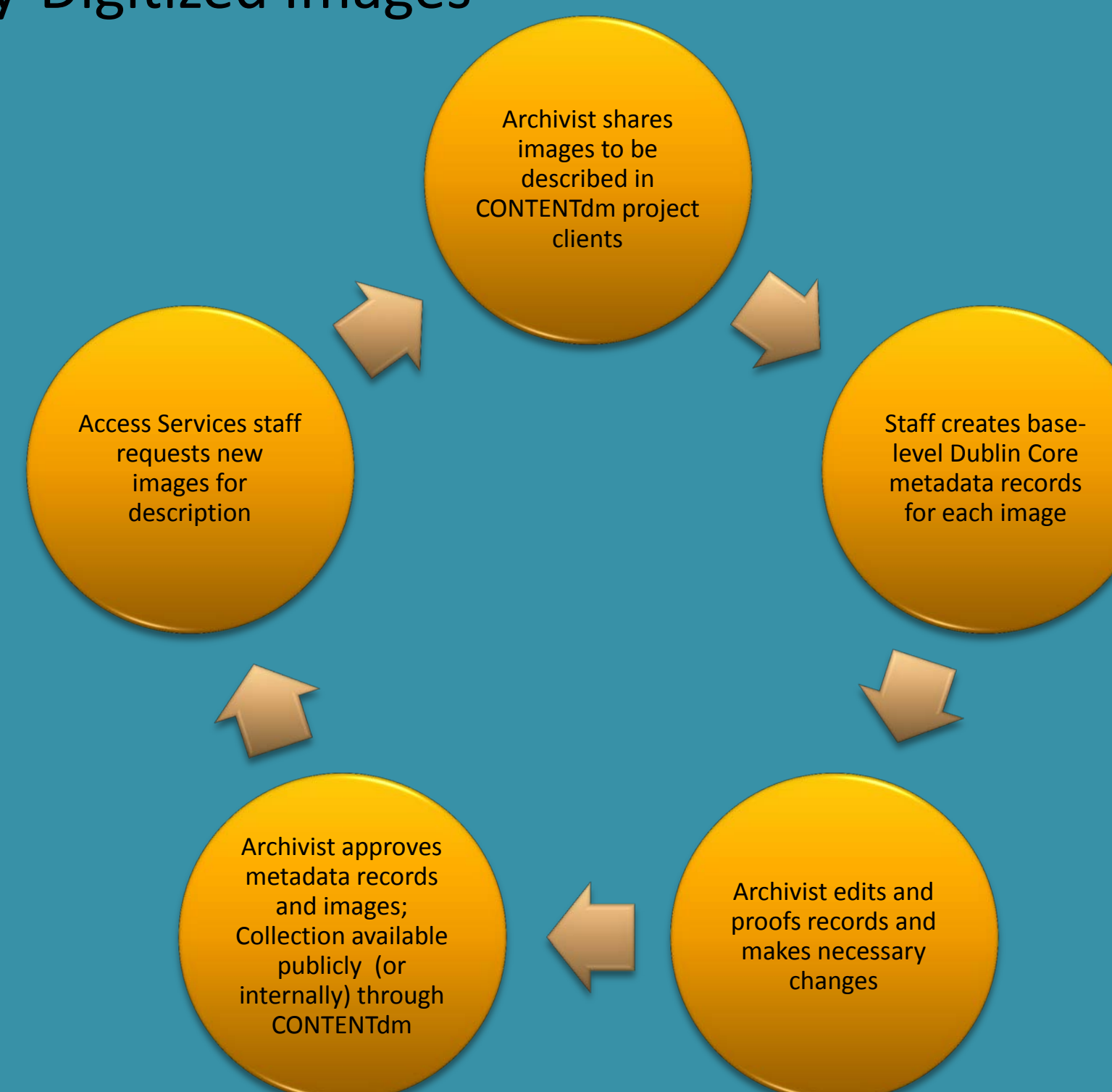
Manuscript Finding Aids:
Online Access

- Manuscript librarian creates finding aid as MS Word document
  - Manuscript librarian hand-encodes EAD finding aid
    - EAD-encoded finding aid uploaded into home-grown system; EAD converted to HTML for display
      - All EAD encoding is lost when put online
  - Manuscript librarian share MS Word document with cataloging to create MARC record
    - Three versions of finding aid saved for each manuscript collection: MS Word; XML; HTML + corresponding MARC record
      - Each version is stored in separate folders with different naming conventions
        - Corrections must be made to each version separately; mistakes, additions, and deaccessions can easily go unchanged in one or more versions
    - Catalogers must make changes to MARC record when changes are made to other versions

Digitization:
Scanning Images

- Researcher or individual project request made for digital surrogate
  - Item scanned; usually a 600dpi master & 300 dpi JPEG access copy created
    - Browse to see if item has already been scanned
      - Stored on shared drive with collection name & manuscript number only identifying details
      - Images saved in one of three directories (depending on who scans it); standard practice often not adhered to
        - Digitization sometimes duplicated because existing scan overlooked or not found
      - No descriptive metadata applied to images
        - Not searchable or publicly accessible

REORGANIZATION

- Library reorganization adds 6 positions to Special Collections Department from Cataloging and Government Docs, doubling the size of the dept. (January 2011)
- Reorganization seeks to devote most experienced catalogers and collections personnel to providing new access to unique materials
- Results in retraining of entire staff, traditional and new

COLLABORATION

- Special Collections works with Access Services Unit to train circulation, reserves, & ILL staff to create robust Dublin Core metadata records for already-scanned digital objects (February 2011)
- Utilize existing library staff & maximize downtime
- Cross-training expands current knowledge & professional experience

New Workflows

Archivists' Toolkit:
Manuscript Collections & University Archives FAs

- **Phase 1:** 435 Finding Aids divided among 12 Special Collections staff members for manual entry into AT (June 2011)
- **Phase 1.5:** Data entry completed; questions and problems compiled and major issues identified (August 2011)
- **Phase 2:** Address issues; cataloging expertise focused on review and cleanup of subject headings and name authorities (September 2011)
- **Phase 3:** University Archives folder title list ingest; subject headings & name authorities applied (October 2011/Ongoing)

Tackling the Backlog:
Describing Already-Digitized Images

- Archivist shares images to be described in CONTENTdm project clients
- Staff creates base-level Dublin Core metadata records for each image
- Archivist edits and proofs records and makes necessary changes
- Archivist approves metadata records and images; Collection available publicly (or internally) through CONTENTdm
- Access Services staff requests new images for description

Creating Collections:
New Digital Collections

- Collections identified for digitization because of high demand or historical significance
- Students scan images; name file according to standard naming conventions; initial QC for image quality
- Access images uploaded into CONTENTdm Project Clients for metadata catalogers to describe
- Metadata records & images undergo QC; items are approved for project
- Collection available publicly through CONTENTdm; Master images stored on separate server

FUTURE PLANS

- Rethink online finding aid access – redesign interface to allow for more robust searching capability
- Continue to develop descriptive expertise for rare and unique materials using non-MARC metadata
- Take workflows beyond library walls – collaborate with university and community partners to increase access to materials

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For details, visit http://guides.library.uncc.edu/backlog

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