

Proposal: Special section of *American Archivist* focused on archival accessioning
Initially drafted June 2023; revised August-September 2023

In the past twenty years, the work of archival accessioning has expanded from the sole creation of a single record to a more comprehensive suite of duties that provide pathways to access, inform future stewardship decisions, and promote sustained resource commitment for the ongoing care of archival materials. Effective accessioning procedures enable foundational description, stabilization, and relationship building that is integral to managing collections ethically throughout their life cycles, avoiding duplication of effort, and establishing meaningful connections with creators and communities. In conference programming and professional scholarship, the topic of accessioning has steadily been on the rise. Institutions are increasingly allocating professional positions devoted *solely* to the management and performance of accessioning duties. Still, individuals performing accessioning work often find themselves isolated and under-supported, combatting misunderstanding of the necessity and complexity of their duties.

To that end, our editorial team proposes the coordination of a special section focused on archival accessioning for the upcoming Spring/Summer 2025 issue of the *American Archivist*. The section will contain 6-10 submissions with introductory material from the editorial team:

The proposed articles would be solicited from the following groups:

1. Members of the National Best Practices for Archival Accessioning Working Group (ABP)
2. Practitioners performing or managing archival accessioning in the wider archival and special collections communities, especially early-career archives and special collections professionals, as well as colleagues working in nonprofit organizations, [HBCUs](#), [AANAPISIs](#) and/or [HSIs](#), public libraries, museums, and community archives

Since SAA's recent approval of the formal inclusion of accessioning in the Accessioning, Acquisitions, and Appraisal Section, the dedication of a special AA section would further demonstrate the organization's commitment to building professional networks and fostering scholarship amongst those in the accessioning community of practice. It would also actively publicize and complement the first set of national best practices for archival accessioning, slated to be published by ABP under the aegis of the SAA Standards Committee in 2024-2025.

Editorial team

The editorial team for this special section brings deep theoretical knowledge and practical expertise informed by both historical and contemporary approaches to archival accessioning. Each member of the team also has prior experience writing, editing, and publishing scholarship concerning archival accessioning. We believe our editorial team's combined experience will help us solicit and shape a praxis-focused collection of scholarship that can help address gaps

in contemporary discourse and make the work of ABP more visible to the wider archival community.

Who we are

Rosemary K. J. Davis

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Co-editor Rosemary K. J. Davis founded the ABP working group in 2022 with Meaghan O’Riordan and is Immediate Past Chair of SAA’s Accessioning, Acquisitions, and Appraisal Section. ABP is set to publish the first set of comprehensive, SAA-standards-approved guidance for archival accessioning labor in all forms in 2024-2025. This proposed special section would serve as both a complement and an extension of these published best practices.

Rachel Searcy

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Co-editor Rachel Searcy is an ABP leader who authored “Beyond Control: Accessioning Practices for Extensible Archival Management,” which helped transform traditional custodial interpretations of accessioning and more accurately contextualized the actions that archivists take during complex accessioning processes.

Audra Eagle Yun

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Co-editor Audra Eagle Yun is an ABP leader who edited the recently published volume, *Archival Accessioning*, which features contributions from a wide range of practitioners and is the first monograph devoted solely to examining the history of and contemporary approaches to archival accessioning in the United States.

Editorial division of labor

Acknowledging that the editorial process is a mixture of administrative tending and developmental interaction that will evolve as needs emerge, we plan on equitably balancing our editorial labor in the following ways:

■ **Collective responsibilities**

- Finalizing and distributing/publicizing CFP
- Defining editorial schedule including reminders, deadlines, revisions, and AA needs
- Develop editorial review rubric for initial review of submissions
- Determining what will be included in the introduction for the special section and generating/adapting that content
- Completing all end game work needed to finalize publication

■ **Submission review and editorial shepherding**

- Divide up submissions evenly for initial layer of editorial review
- Editorial share sessions allowing us to recap, discuss, and recommend each submission we've been working with, using a team-developed review rubric to help focus in on specific accept/reject decisions + editorial assignments
- Divide up accepted submissions amongst the three of us evenly based on interest, expertise, or other pertinent criteria determined to be useful
- Assigning/identifying peer reviewers, in line with AA guidance
- Each editor is responsible for shepherding the submissions in their portfolio, doing any developmental editing and revisions oversight needed, and keeping on schedule

Draft call for article submissions

We invite submissions for a special section in *American Archivist* focused on illuminating the wide-ranging spectrum of archival accessioning practices in our field today. This special section will place dual emphasis on the process and output of the National Best Practices for Archival Accessioning working group (ABP), along with broader practical experiences and perspectives from folks actively working to implement a diverse range of accessioning labor throughout the archival lifecycle in different contexts. We strongly encourage submissions that are practical in nature, as well as works that explore contemporary accessioning theory and praxis.

Submissions can explore any of the many operational facets of contemporary archival accessions including:

- pre-custodial engagement and archival appraisal
- donor relations, radical empathy + candor, and relationship building/maintenance
- packing and transportation of collection material
- foundational and/or iterative archival description, particularly as it relates to inclusive language, institutional transparency
- born-digital accessions
- ethical concerns and lived experiences related to accessions practices
- physical stabilization and preservation interventions for collection material at the point of intake and accessions
- space usage and stacks management
- sustainability and climate impact of accessions practices
- deaccessions and reappraisal
- management of and advocacy for accessions labor
- development of an accessions program, particularly as it relates to operational impact and sustainable stewardship
- perspectives on the evolution of archival accessions, from a single finite record to a more comprehensive suite of labor types
- post-colonial, post-custodial, reparative, and/or community-centered approaches to accessions
- applied theoretical frameworks (e.g., critical race theory, feminist theory)
- perspectives on archival education and training for accessions
- critical analysis of foundational concepts archival concepts (e.g., provenance, respect des fonds, appraisal) in relation to contemporary accessions practices
- members of the National Best Practices for Archival Accessions Working Group (ABP) are particularly encouraged to submit pieces that place the newly developed best practices into real world contexts or that expand upon writings contained within the best practices

We seek submissions from authors with a wide variety of career experiences and diverse perspectives related to archival accessions practices. The editorial team especially encourages submissions from early-career archives and special collections professionals, as well as from colleagues working in nonprofit organizations, [HBCUs](#), [AANAPISIs](#) and/or [HSIs](#), public libraries, museums, and community archives. Submissions can take any of the following forms:

- **Research Articles** → analytical and critical expositions based on original investigation or on systematic review of literature. (Suggested length: 8,000 words)

- **Case Studies** → analytical reports of projects or activities that take place in a specific setting and offer the basis for emulation or comparison in other settings. (Suggested length: 3,000 words)
- **Perspectives** → commentaries, reflective or opinion pieces, addressing issues or practices that concern archivists and their constituents. (Suggested length: 2,000-2500 words)
- **Professional Resources** → can be annotated bibliographies, other items designed for practical use within the profession, or essays that review the developments (as opposed to the literature) in specified areas in a way that describes particular initiatives and places them in the context of broader trends. (Length varies)

Submissions will be reviewed by the editorial team, following the *American Archivist* editorial policies outlined [here](#). All pieces selected for inclusion in this special section will go through the *American Archivist* peer review process, the rubric for which can be found [here](#).

Editorial and publication timeline overview

The following is a possible timeline for the CFP and submission deadlines, based upon suggestions from Amy Cooper Cary with some slight adjustments to reflect labor by the editorial team:

- **Autumn 2023:** Editorial team gathers feedback from ABP on content ideas
- **January-March 2024:** Editorial team revision and finalization of CFP
- **Spring 2024:** CFP distributed
- **Summer 2024:** Editorial outreach at SAA 2024, in conjunction with ABP symposium
- **October 1, 2024:** Deadline for submissions
- **November 2024 - January 2025:** Editorial team completes article selection, reading, and editing
- **February 2025:** Article review by Amy Cooper Cary
- **March 2025:** Articles sent for copyediting
- **May 2025:** Articles sent for layout
- **June 2025:** Section published in Spring/Summer issue of *AA*