



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Building the Foundation: Archival Surveying and Collections Metadata

Morag Boyd and Cate Putirskis

Society of Ohio Archivists, May 16, 2014



Journey to Archival Technical Services

Point of origin

First steps

Making a map

Planning the route

Destination



Special Collections at OSUL

- Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum

Archives Group

- Byrd Polar Research Center Archival Program
- Ohio Congressional Archives/John Glenn Archives
- University Archives

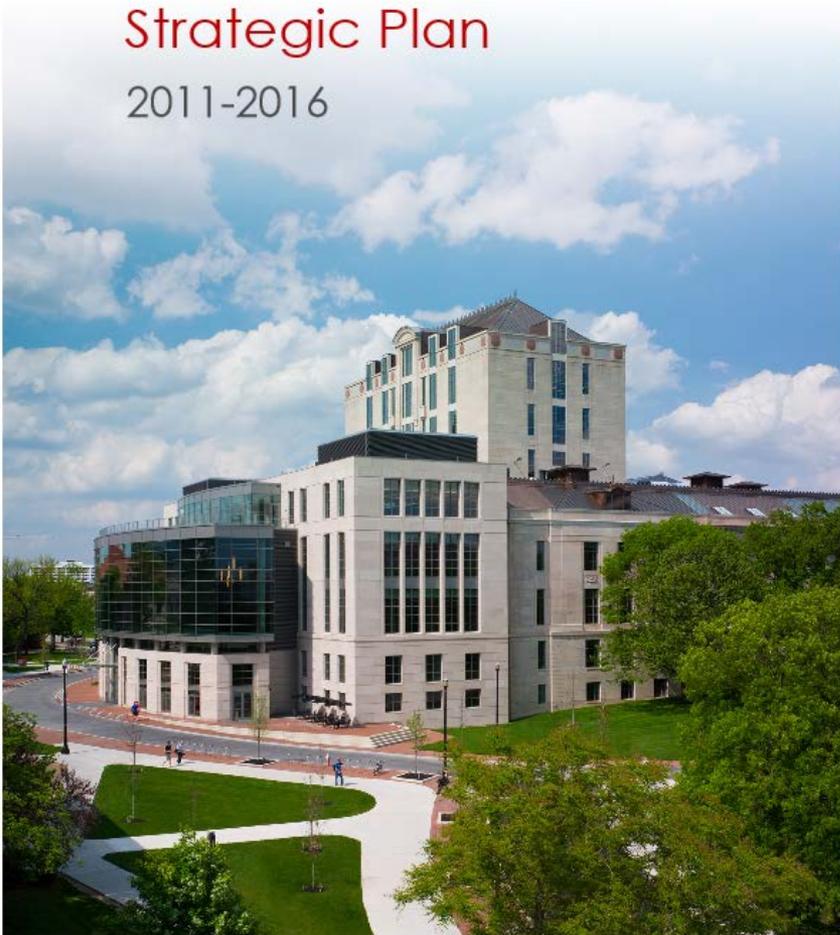
Thompson Special Collections

- Hilandar Research Library
- Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee Theatre Research Institute
- Rare Books and Manuscripts/Charvat Collection of American Literature



Strategic Plan

2011-2016



Setting the Direction: Strategic Plan

<http://go.osu.edu/OSULplan>

- New emphasis on access to special collections



Emphasis on special and distinctive collections

“Rare materials and unique primary source materials differentiate research libraries and enhance their role as distinctive destinations for knowledge building. Greater emphasis on cataloging and making these ‘hidden collections’ widely accessible is energizing scholarship in new directions. Creating digital versions of rare materials leverages the value of the originals, improves access, and supports innovative teaching and scholarship”

OSUL Strategic Plan



Managing print and digital collections effectively

“Space concerns require rethinking of previous print collection management decisions. Research libraries must increasingly rely on shared print shelving facilities and collaborative programs of various kinds to maximize their users’ access to collections in this environment. Refining local collections in the context of digital availability, collective agreements, shared offsite storage, and coordinated print retention will become common in libraries of all sizes”

OSUL Strategic Plan



Strategic Plan Focus Areas

2.2 Position distinctive collections, spaces and services in user's pathways, in both physical and virtual environments, to promote intellectual inquiry and encourage lifelong learning.



Strategic Plan Focus Areas

2.2 Position distinctive collections, spaces and services in user's pathways, in both physical and virtual environments, to promote intellectual inquiry and encourage lifelong learning.



Strategic Plan Focus Areas

4. Increase the scale and scope of distinctive and digital collections and enhance access to and usage of these materials to support research and anytime, anywhere learning



Strategic Plan Focus Areas

5. Increase the effectiveness of local print collection management and act to provide access to the full range of emerging “collective collections” regionally and nationally



Strategic Plan Focus Areas

9. Build a robust, reliable, secure technical infrastructure for the Libraries including both human and technology resources



Key actions:

Head, Digital Initiatives begins in April 2013

Special Collections Processing Coordinator begins
September 2013

- Lead development of a processing program that informs activity at all Special Collections



Hidden Collections Survey

Reasoning: Don't know what we have, what condition it's in, what the accessibility level is (though we do have a pretty good idea *where* it is)



Building on Past Work

Previous survey a few years prior: good foundation, but didn't provide the information that we really needed (however, having gone through this process recently, colleagues had info available, could provide useful information)



Starting Over

Reviewed what had been collected to date & discussed usefulness of information

Decided we needed to start over, survey everything, and collect additional information



What is “everything?”

- Which collections we’re looking at
- What we’re looking at from each collection (how much, etc.)

What is “additional information?”

- [include list here]
- Survey of metadata in addition to physical contents
- Assign processing difficulty ratings during surveying



Where we're at so far

- Things take longer than you plan on...
- Tried to incorporate students into the process, but have not found a successful way to do so (that maintains efficiency)



What we're learning

- As expected, finding numerous interesting resources (with extremely limited current accessibility)
- Some collections have been processed and housed well
- ...but many collections have not been processed well (and/or inadequately housed)
- Many collections are lacking accessible metadata



Establishing Guiding Principles

Shared Goals:

- Centralization processing
- Adopt MPLP principles



Building Consensus

Many stakeholders to consider

Involve people early and often

Present information in many contexts

Consider specific needs within the overall goals

Still working on this



Tool Selection

Task Force organized in Fall 2013

Recommended ArchivesSpace

Report pointed out the many culture and process changes needed to fully realize any tool change

Identified functional requirements and priority ratings



Environmental Scan for Policies/Practices

Talked with colleagues with various responsibilities/roles with material

How did each unit process & describe a collection, for instance?



Environmental Scan for Policies/Practices

What policies and documentation existed? (very little—TRI did have some processing guidelines)

- Examples: how are folders labeled and/or numbered? Where/how finding aids written? What is done with collection additions? What is done with extraneous collection content? Or content that should be restricted?



Environmental Scan for Policies/Practices

Began to find minimal overlap—thus, we knew there would be greater challenge down the road when time came to revise/implement new policies

- Began discussions to consider what could be done the same, and what would need to be changed (which is: not much/mostly everything...)
- Guided by policies that we identified as needing to be established or revisited



Establishing Standardized Practices

Had gathered info on existing practices (and/or procedures that did not exist, but should), began discussions [still ongoing]

Example: met to discuss privacy concerns and how to address these items during processing

Worked out an accessioning workflow

Developing procedures to deal with archival collections that contain materials independently under catalog control



Goal: More Standardized Practices

Had gathered info on existing practices (and/or procedures that did not exist, but should), began discussions [still ongoing]

Example: met to discuss privacy concerns and how to address these items during processing

Worked out an accessioning workflow

Developing procedures to deal with archival collections that contain materials independently under catalog control



Goal: Processing Manual

There isn't one...but there will be

“Master” manual & student supplement

As a yet undetermined amount of this work will be guided by decisions we make regarding processing program and A-Space workflows, true writing of the manual delayed until those items are worked out



ArchivesSpace Implementation

Sandbox phase

Beginning January 2014:

- Accessioning in ArchivesSpace
- Test cases for building finding aids

Applying lessons learned as we begin full implementation

- Task Force just launched to make detailed implementation decisions



Systems Development Support

Will be identifying and prioritizing ArchivesSpace needs

- Donor and contact managements
- Museum objects

And how we will get there

- Data migrations



Gathering Metadata: Paper?

University Archives scanned paper inventories

How can we convert them?

- Too inconsistent for wholesale conversion
- Breakdown into subsets that are similar

Looked for other resources

- Is shelf list a better starting point?



Gathering Metadata: Conversion

Structured metadata migrations

- Mapping fields
- Normalize within and across data sources



Physical Processing

In preparation to send materials to third party storage (and expedite the goal of increasing metadata access and discoverability of materials), making a significant shift to MPLP processing & description

At the same time, we have to send materials to 3rd party in good shape, because they may sit out there for years untouched—so, balancing speed with long-term sustainability



Resources

Training—colleagues, students, everyone—how to process, how to describe, how to use A-Space, etc.

Realign student assistants to more centralized processing program; restructure processing so that students are working on projects on their level

Supplies: consolidate supply ordering, etc. and centralize under the processing program



Where we see ourselves in 2016 ...

- Following standards-based and efficient processing
- Reduced backlogs
- Improved discoverability of collections, in our own systems and by sharing our metadata
- Staff time used more effectively
- Meet our goal of Special Collections as the foundation for new research



Where others can learn ...

- Carefully planned surveys are an essential foundation for tackling backlog
- Achieving overall goals will require change
- Standards-based practice pays off in the long run



Questions?

Morag Boyd

Head of Special Collections Description and Access

Boyd.402@osu.edu

Cate Putirskis

Special Collections Processing Coordinator

Putirskis.1@osu.edu