EDITOR'S NOTE

Public access to the records in archives is at the heart of the mission of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission. From our direct grants to projects in archives and repositories across the United States to our support of documentary editions, our aim is to bring records into the bright light of scholarship and scrutiny. One of the most pressing challenges is to deal with backlogs of unprocessed records; another is to broaden the audience by harnessing modern tools, particularly the Internet, to the wealth of historical documents.

Former NHPRC Director for State Programs Richard A. Cameron.

This issue focuses on new approaches that archives and documentary editions are undertaking to widen and deepen public access, and participation, in archives.

Last fall, we said goodbye to long-time director of state programs, Dick Cameron. The Commission adopted this resolution at its November 2006 meeting:

Richard A. Cameron joined the staff of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission in June 1988 and served with distinction with the Historical Records Coordinators and Historical Records Advisory Boards in all fifty states, U.S. territories, and the District of Columbia. As Director for State Programs, Dick was instrumental in the growth and development of the Council of State Archivists, working with its officers and directors to strengthen the national network of state archives. Beyond his work with the states, Dick provided leadership and wise counsel on hundreds of records projects across the country, effectively promoting the preservation of vital records and public access to our documentary heritage. A Fellow of the Society of American Archivists, a published contributor to *The American Archivist* and other professional journals, he has been a steadfast champion for archives and a valued friend and colleague. The Commission thanks Richard A. Cameron for his dedicated service to its programs with our sincere respect and affection.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S
MESSAGE

I have always believed that the calling of archivist must be about more than putting away interesting old things to be preserved forever. While a necessary part of the archives business, that aspect is too limiting. Pervasive, preservation pickling is a means to support the real end for archives: access and use of historical records. The records and documents found in archives live in the stories they help tell. If not used, then archives are nothing but pieces of paper (or celluloid, or Mylar, or . . . you get the point).

Archives when used intelligently and in context are the pieces of puzzles that—with other documents, sources, bits and bytes, and information generally—make sense of the world; prove a point or establish a legal fact; or entertain, amaze, dazzle, or inspire. But archives kept securely locked up in neat boxes in dark rooms produce none of that. They need to find the light of day to serve their true meaning. The papers need people, just as the people need the papers.

One of the reasons for an NHPRC is to open those boxes. From its beginning, the Commission's legislatively assigned purpose was to encourage those individuals and organizations holding historical records to make them more accessible through turning the most important documents into books—that's why Publishing is our middle name—and by "the preparation and publication of . . . guides, inventory lists, catalogs, and other instruments facilitating the use of the collections." This original mission, publishing documents and producing and publishing finding aids, continues to drive us today, and with the same ultimate purpose: improving access to and use of the historical record.

The last 40 years have seen great changes in the way historical editors and archivists have carried out their responsibilities. Much of this change has been made possible by the development of new tools. The use of computerized word processors and databases has made the production, editing, indexing, and updating of editions and finding aids easier and faster. Information retrieval, searching and displaying, and presenting texts were unintended, but happy, consequences. Bibliographic networks and standardizing on the MARC format for describing archival collections was a next step, followed by EAD, a standard for describing the components of each collection while maintaining the all-important relationships between each of them. MARC and EAD made a smooth transition to the Web, which itself is a tool for publishing information. It is now possible to imagine a single web site where

Max J. Evans

one can search the catalog entries and finding aids for all archival holdings in the United States, or the world, for that matter. And, similarly, we can envision one-stop shopping for all of the documentary editions produced in this country. I feel confident that both of these very impressive visions are likely to come to pass within a very few years.

Yet, as important as is this ability to produce and publish finding aids and documentary editions online, it is fundamentally a way of creating and distributing information not at all unlike the past 450 years of publishing: authors, editors, and publishers produce it; libraries (or the Internet) store it; and users retrieve it and use it.

But something "wiki" this way comes. The evolution of the Internet is changing the way information is collected, created, and distributed. Part of the reason for this evolution lies in the very nature of the Internet and how systems and processes have grown. The open source movement, which promulgated the practice of freely sharing and modifying programming code and, later, programs themselves led to a shift in attitudes. The old practice of one publisher distributing to many users has been suborned by a more free market approach to sharing information and knowledge wherein many creators and producers reach many users. Perhaps the most famous example of this is the Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia maintained by an informal, anonymous, and self-selected community of those who contribute articles on a vast array of topics, from the ridiculous to the sublime.

Wikipedia is but one example of the changing nature of the Internet, and you don't need to look far to find other tools from blogs to YouTube, from MySpace to the latest new thing from Google. This isn't your father's Web anymore, and some people are talking about the next iteration as Web 2.0. Wikipedia says the term "refers to a supposed second-generation of Internet-based services—such as social networking sites, wikis, communication tools, and folksonomies—that let people collaborate and share information online in previously unavailable ways."

Some of those previously unavailable ways of sharing ideas include working together in real time on shared problems and projects, and contributing expertise, knowledge, and data. Some examples that spring to mind are the computer operating system Linux and its continuing development; the mapping of craters on Mars by thousands of volunteers; the gaming culture of people who create and continually modify a thriving virtual world; LibraryThing, Flickr.com, Blogger, Technorati, YouTube, Boing-Boing, and probably others since I wrote this.

What does this have to do with those of us in the historical records community? How might we take advantage of this revo-

lution in virtual communities to create and maintain content? A few examples:
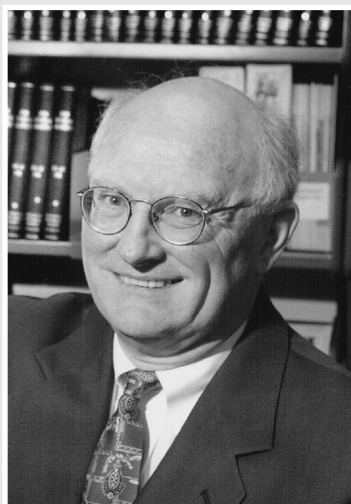
Historical records repositories can publish online collections using mass digitization methods that produce only minimum metadata. Researchers finding these collections, employing online catalogs and finding aids, may use them as they would in the reading room, by opening a virtual folder and digitally thumbing through its contents. Given that the archives staff will likely never have the time and resources to produce detailed, item-level indexes to these collections, this is a good and workable solution, certainly no worse than asking researchers to travel to the reading room, and in many ways much better.

However, thinking Web 2.0, it is a critical step toward something even better, something closer to the perfect archives. A digitized collection with minimum or extensible metadata can be the locus of a social community, a place for people to meet in cyberspace and contribute to a deeper understanding of the individual documents in the collection. They might engage in a wide range of activities, including indexing, transcribing, and/or comment[ing?]. [...] of management of these activities by the archives is a matter of policy and of the time and energy to devote to it. Shall the archives permit open-ended folksonomies or must it enforce authority control through taxonomies in a social coding environment? How much review and editing need be done to make the product most useful? How much of review and editing can be carried out in the community?

If transcripts and keywords are provided as index entries, then folksonomic terms and "dirty" transcripts may serve their purposes very well indeed, especially if the document images, and not only the community-supplied texts, are available as the best representation of the authoritative source. The benefits of perfect community-supplied texts may not be justified by the

costs. But, again, that is a policy and resource question.

Documentary editors might benefit from similar approaches. Working with much more limited sets of records, they can impose stricter standards and perhaps even control the size and makeup of their communities. But it's not hard to imagine editorial projects that distribute web images to contractors, domestic and offshore, for the first round of transcribing. The resulting copy goes to an editor for proofreading, correction, and polish, and then to another set of editors for oral proofreading. Nothing new here, except that much of this work might be done by experts outside the project's

physical offices. They could be contractors: faculty members or graduate students at distant universities, retirees, or parents working at home. The editor's job, then, would be to recruit and manage a wide variety of people, many part-time, and ensure that tasks are completed on time or assigned to others.

Editors add their scholarly touch by adding headnotes and annotation to documents. This, too, may be a task for scholars who are part of a virtual community. Freelance historians might contribute their expertise in a particular field of study, say, the Revolutionary War, to the each of a half-dozen projects with papers covering that period.

Finally, we fool ourselves if we ever think there is a finally. In this wiki-like model, there is no "final" set of records, no "final" [doc]umentary edition. All tran[scribe]d, edited, and annotated documents

found online provide a tool that encourages users to comment, to question, to use the documents as forums for debate and study. And then, all of this community-based content becomes part of the record that adds value to the scholarly work of the editors. Topical index terms, for example, are notorious for quickly going out-of-date as our understanding of topics and themes changes and as we find sources to support new historiographical works years after the works are published. The ongoing process of social coding might help open old documents to a new understanding.

The thought of actively engaging others, even nonexperts, in our work as archivists and editors challenges sacred traditions and assumptions, as it should. The human desire for mastery is as old as Cain and Abel, but the countervailing impulse for community is not only more egalitarian but more beneficial in the end. Such a radical change should not be undertaken lightly or without a thorough examination of the potential consequences. We should make room in our intellectual lives for both the Wikipedia and the *Encyclopedia Britannica,* the amateur who comes to the archives with passion and the professional who comes with experience. Community-based peer production is a powerful concept, not only as an economic model, but also as a social movement that can ignite a firestorm of interest in our work and in using documents for teaching. Putting the people in touch with and encouraging them to interact with primary sources will result in deepening society's understanding of our rich and textured history.

A digitized collection with minimum or extensible metadata can be the locus of a social community, a place for people to meet in cyberspace and contribute to a deeper understanding of the individual documents in the collection.

DOING DIGITAL
HISTORY

By Holly Cowan Shulman

As I finish the second "volume" of *The Dolley Madison Digital Edition* (University of Virginia Press, 2004, and forthcoming), it's a good moment to reflect on what it means to be a digital pioneer: a documentary editor who publishes born-digital electronic editions. After all, there is still a fair amount of skepticism about digital history, especially the question of how historians can employ the Web to enhance scholarship by utilizing what is inherent in the new medium, while adhering to the standards of the old. I think *The Dolley Madison Digital Edition* (DMDE) does just that.

What's important about being born-digital is the "third dimension" of editorial work. Of course in many ways the labor that goes into creating a documentary edition is the same whatever the publishing medium. But being born-digital means building a traditional documentary edition on top of metadata that is delivered to you online. It is an electronic archive rather than a static web site. To phrase this as a simple list, the electronic environment allows access, space, searchability, mutability, and collaboration.

We talk about access all the time. This essay was published originally at the History News Network, and readers may be in Northern Virginia (alongside HNN's server), London, Sydney, Los Angeles, or even Vail while on your winter skiing vacation. While it's unlikely that you have bought the DMDE from the University of Virginia Press as a single purchaser, your library, whether public, school, or university, has it. They give you access.

We talk less about space—and often use the rather dreadful term "screen real estate." But letterpress editions are always fighting for enough space to produce the results they want in each volume. Annotations are kept short. Some documents may only be calendared, leaving the scholar to go to an archive, documentary volume in hand, to seek out the full text. I won't say that space is endless or irrelevant in an electronic environment, but it's far less cramped. And most of all, because you read differently online, I decided that rather than footnotes (which my undergraduate students always found distracting and difficult when presented on screen), the DMDE should provide annotation as a pop-up box, which is flexible and far more capacious than a traditional footnote.

Searchability has become a household word, and we live with it all the time, even if only through Google and JSTOR. But for me, it meant I could design an edition in which the reader could search not only by word or phrase, but by person, place, organization, title, concept, and chronology. And that's not an "or" but

an "and." You can search for a person, in a place, who belonged to an organization in a given year. Try looking for James Laurie and the American Colonization Society in 1836, or Thomas Jefferson and Philadelphia in 1805, or Ruth Barlow and death in 1812. And because we're handcrafted you can search by a topic such as the War of 1812, slavery, death and mourning, and find results even when the words war, slavery, or death don't ever appear in the letter.

As good as this all sounds, there is more. Since the edition is electronic, you can go back and add a letter or correct an annotation. The University of Virginia Press has now added a response button: when a reader thinks there is a mistake, she or he can tell me. It's not a "wiki"—software that allows users to freely create and edit web page content—the edition remains authoritative, but we're listening to all of you who want to talk to us.

Scholars will be able to actively participate by marking up Dolley's letters to pursue their own interests. For example, I thought it would be interesting to know what the women of this period were reading, so we tag the DMDE not only for literary titles, but for the literary references that dot the epistolary landscape of Dolley and her contemporaries. A scholar in the future might contact the University of Virginia Press with the idea either of taking the framework and working on it privately, without publishing her or his results, or producing an addition to the DMDE as her own electronic publication. A student interested in women of the Founding Era, may bookmark some of Dolley's letters through a social bookmarking system for storing, sharing, and discovering web sites such as *del.icio.us,* and bring materials together for themselves or to share.

My goal is to be as collaborative and interoperable as possible. In the 21st century, not only will documentary editing remain a source of creative scholarship, editions that are born-digital will allow for greater creativity and open up more scholarship. Working with the University of Virginia Press and the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, I plan to launch *Women of the Founding Era*, a collection of the correspondence of critical women of the Founding Era. Scholars will then be able to read across the correspondence of not only Dolley, but Abigail Adams, Martha Washington, Eliza Lucas Pinckney, Martha Jefferson Randolph, Ruth Barlow, and others (as well as the founding fathers themselves, whose papers are now being republished as conversion electronic editions by the Press). At that point, born-digital documentary editing will become a first-stop for all historians of the Founding Era, and a beacon for the future of digital history.

Holly Cowan Shulman is the editor of The Dolley Madison Digital Edition, *and with David B. Mattern,* The Selected Letters of Dolley Madison, *both published by the University of Virginia Press. She is Research Professor, Studies in Women and Gender, at the University of Virginia. She can be reached at* hshulman@virginia.edu.

GOING DIGITAL

Going digital is hardly new for documentary edition projects, but advancements in software have improved the quality and scope of digital editions. Three new projects look particularly promising:

The Dolley Madison Digital Edition (http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu:8080/dmde/) is now online with its first installment of over 700 letters, and some 2,000 additional letters to follow. An XML-based archive, the digital edition allows users to perform simple or advanced searches and through a comprehensive, sortable list. The edition is part of the Rotunda American Founding Era collection at the University of Virginia, with forthcoming digital archives planned for the papers of George Washington, James Madison, and Alexander Hamilton. Through the Virginia Center for Digital History, scholars will also have access to award-winning legacy projects on the American Civil War and "Virtual Jamestown" and other new features.

The *Thomas Jefferson Retirement Series* (http://www.monticello.org/papers/index.html), which is creating a link to every document of the second President's retirement period; these documents are held in repositories across the country, and the project, housed at Monticello, is attempting to make as much of the primary source material on Jefferson as possible freely accessible on the Web through the sponsorship of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation.

The *Papers of Benjamin Franklin* digital edition (http://www.franklinpapers.org/franklin/), created and maintained by the Packard Humanities Institute and previously available to scholars and researchers on CD-ROM, is now available to the public with an introduction by Edmund S. Morgan. This digital edition includes texts of the published papers and unverified, rough transcriptions of the as-yet-unpublished material. The rough transcriptions will be replaced with verified texts as future volumes of the *Franklin Papers* are published. The texts are fully searchable and are indexed by volume, name of correspondent, and date.

MORE FOR LESS IN
ARCHIVES

By Tom Hyry

The research of Mark A. Greene and Dennis Meissner[1] has sent a shockwave through the archival community, challenging long-held assumptions and traditions. While some in the archives field have considered their prescribed remedies as bitter medicine, they present an eminently reasonable approach to processing, especially the unending backlogs of unprocessed records. Manuscripts and Archives, a department in the Yale Library, might well serve as a case study for how the Greene/Meissner principles can work. As Head of Arrangement and Description there for six years, I oversaw all processing work in the department and established relevant priorities and procedures. We must come to different conceptions of the words "processing" and "backlog" by allowing our standards to evolve. Our goals should be to get a reasonable amount of work done on all of our collections, so we no longer think of them as in a backlog.

The pressures causing our backlogs are not going away; if anything they will increase. Technological developments are causing our collections to become larger and more complicated, involving many more record formats than ever before. Moreover, as professionals, we are now being asked to do more than ever: staff resources are getting stretched ever thinner, and budgets rarely increase accordingly. To meet these challenges, we must work smarter and also make compromises in our traditional sense of craft by adapting our processing methods accordingly.

New methods of processing should rest on the following principles:

- *Every collection in a repository deserves some level of description.* Following that assumption, it is more important to have at least a minimal level of processing and description done on all of a repository's holdings than to have highly detailed work done on a few collections, while others suffer the fate of being hidden from researchers.
- *All collections are not created equal.* In a perfect world, we would process all of our holdings to an ideal level. In the real world, we must make hard decisions about which collections to process more fully, and which can get by with less. These decisions should be closely linked with collection development policies, repository mission statements, and other appraisal tools and methodologies that should be thought-

[1] Mark Greene and Dennis Meissner, "More Product, Less Process: Revamping Traditional Archival Processing," *American Archivist*, 68; no.2 (Fall/Winter 2005): 208–263.

out and articulated in advance. Our most important and difficult collections still need detailed processing, with the realization that these collections will likely make up only a small part of the whole of our holdings.

- *Different parts of a collection need not be processed to the same level.* Even collections with extremely high research value often include series within them that do not need detailed arrangement, description, and preservation.
- *Collections are not truly available to researchers unless they are described online, at least at the collection level, through catalog records, finding aids, and/or other tools.*
- *We process materials so that researchers can use them.* Our decisions about processing should be driven by how well a collection can be used and how much it will be used and not to conform to a sense of professionalism that serves the needs of processors as much as researchers.
- *We should make our preliminary inventories, even if they are only sketchy accession records, available to researchers, ideally with the same mechanisms we use to make the finding aids for our processed collections available.* To do this, we may need to sacrifice some of our pride in craft.
- *From a user perspective, imperfect information is better than none at all.* Moreover, we should allow researchers access to our unprocessed and underprocessed collections, unless there is a very compelling reason not to. Such reasons include collections with materials that are restricted, either by donor agreements or by law, collections that have very severe preservation problems, or collections with major potential for theft. While there are exceptions, our default should be to make collections available, whether they have been fully processed or not.

The "Minimum Standards" Era

These principles for processing evolved over time and through very practical concerns. In 1998 my colleagues Christine Weideman, Diane Kaplan, and I were charged with devising a way to handle a large backlog of unprocessed manuscript collections that had accumulated over the past few decades. The backlog consisted predominately of 20th-century collections, ranging from 20 to 200 feet and beyond. Unprocessed at the time for us meant collections for which no preservation, arrangement, or appraisal work had been done. These collections only had rudimentary description through a collection-level catalog record and what we call a "preliminary" finding aid, consisting of a container-level listing and a section called the Overview of the Papers, which repurposed the information found in our catalog records. As we began our analysis, we were working on the assumption that each of these collections would be open and accessible to the public, that we would one day get to them and give them a full processing treatment, even though many of them had been in the backlog for 20 years or more without any demand for use or further processing.

Within this project, we analyzed each of these collections and determined that using even a high rate of processing speed to make estimates, we were looking at 10 to 15 years of work ahead of us, and only if we stopped collecting altogether. Clearly, different methods were needed. As a response to this problem, we segregated collections into several different categories within our backlog:

- *Frontlog:* New collections or additions that require only a modest amount of work.
- *Professional:* Collections with extremely high research value, or ones posing the most complex problems in appraisal, arrangement, description, and/or preservation.
- *Graduate student:* collections that could use more descriptive analysis or appraisal, but that are small enough to be handled by a part-time person over the course of an academic year. Some of these collections also require language or subject skills.

Finally, and most importantly, we established a category that came to be called "minimum standards" for processing, which we planned to use on the vast majority of the collections. These minimum standards included the following stripped-down tasks:

1. Basic arrangement of the collection into a sensible whole, at most to the folder level.
2. Only major preservation concerns are addressed.
3. Restricted materials are located and segregated, if they are easily identified.
4. A finding aid is written that includes an overview of the papers (which we use to construct a MARC record) and a box and folder-level inventory.

This level of processing does not include much appraisal, unless done on a gross level. We also do not meticulously remove metal fasteners, arrange items within folders, or write long descriptive scope and content notes or biographical sketches. The philosophy is to streamline processing, to do only what is absolutely necessary to make our holdings more usable as quickly as possible.

While a professional archivist develops the processing plans for minimum standards collections, most of the work is overseen by a support staff member who in turn supervises students to carry out most of the work.

Although it preceded the Greene/Meissner approach, our "minimum standards" for processing turned out to be very much in concert with their suggestions. We had initially planned to attack the minimum standards backlog aggressively, with hopes of eliminating it in a few years. We did successfully process a few of the collections in this backlog, including a 50-foot collection relating to a former faculty member. Like many great plans though, circumstances changed our conception of the backlog even further. This occurred for at least two reasons. Because many of the collections in the minimum standards backlog would not meet the more stringent appraisal guidelines we use today, we felt comfortable leaving them in their current state of rudimentary physical and intellectual control, until and unless we have great reason to do more work on them. Even though some of our preliminary inventories leave much to be desired, these collections are available to users. When we do decide to process these collections to a greater level, we base those decisions primarily and almost exclusively on the perceived research value and use of the collection. We no longer assume we will give even minimum standards treatment to all of our collections.

Perhaps more importantly, we achieved less than we initially intended because all the staff members assigned to work on processing the minimum standards backlog have been pulled away by more pressing duties. Chief among these are our efforts to convert the legacy finding aids for our ca. 2,400 collections into EAD, so that we can make them available to the research community via the Web. While we would ideally like to do more work on certain collections in the backlog, the basic level of control we have over the collections allows us to feel comfortable prioritizing other work over backlog processing.

The "Accessioning as Processing" Era (aka the Current Era)

The importance of the "minimum standards" era lies less in what it accomplished than in the conceptual direction it set for us. It

instilled the idea of different levels of processing, enabling us to get to the point where we are today, where every collection receives a basic level of work and we use our processing resources wisely, ensuring that everything has some level of access, while being opportunistic about applying a more detailed level of processing when resources allow. Reaching this point has led to further refinements in processing practice. Recognizing that we will not likely return to most collections after they are accessioned, we now try and do slightly more work while accessioning materials. My colleague Christine Weideman described these processes at an SAA session in 2005, and in her report, to be published in *The American Archivist,* from which I borrow below.[2]

The first step in any accessioning process is working with donors. In Manuscripts and Archives, we now make a great effort to manage donors' expectations and detail the level of work we intend to do on their collection when it comes into the repository. During the negotiation process, we show them examples of the collection-level catalog records and basic finding aids we create. This usually impresses them, as most donors have little to no experience with archival description. We also stress the fact that collections will be available to researchers once they come into the department, so that they should identify any confidential materials and place an appropriate restriction upon them or not transfer them at all. Critics of the Greene/Meissner approach have charged that processing materials to a less granular level will lead to researcher access to sensitive materials—discussing these matters up front with donors alleviates this concern.

Once the donor negotiations are complete and materials come into the department, we rehouse them into standard boxes, arrange them to the minimum level, when possible, and identify any major appraisal and preservation concerns. As the Greene/Meissner approach advocates, we generally do preservation and appraisal on a macrolevel; we are fortunate to have an off-site shelving facility that has optimal preservation conditions and space to grow.

After dealing with the appraisal, arrangement, and preservation concerns, we work

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2 Christine Weideman, "Accessioning as Processing," *American Archivist,* forthcoming.

on describing the records. Knowing that we are unlikely to process a series collection more fully at another time, we do our best to be as thorough as possible at this step. We have found the description stage to be the least time-consuming with the biggest payoff in researcher access. So when possible, we will do folder-level listings, trying to bring out names, titles, and other access points that will return hits for researchers searching our online finding aids.

The work we did on a recent accession of the records of the Center for Information on America illustrates the approach. The Center existed for three decades beginning in the early 1950s. Its purpose was to publish works that furthered public understanding of America's self-governing, democratic process. Most of the records were in folders that were in decent shape. Although they were not particularly well arranged, we were able to quickly identify major groupings such as administration, minutes, reports, financial, publications, and correspondence/subject files. The latter appeared to have been originally arranged in alphabetical order, and that is how we pulled them together. Nothing obvious jumped out at us in terms of materials that should be separated from the collection, either because they were duplicates or entirely out of the scope of the organization's work. We only looked inside folders when they were unlabeled and in order to identify the materials in them. None of the materials inside folders were rearranged, and we did no item-level preservation.

We kept the materials in Paige boxes and created a box inventory on paper, which a support staff member entered into our finding aid template. For the correspondence/ subject files, we listed the letters of the alphabet covered in each box. Our inventories always begin with what we call an "Overview of the Papers or Records," which contains fields that map to the MARC record. A professional archivist wrote and entered the information in the fields in the Overview, from which the support staff member created the catalog record, and they worked together to determine access points for the catalog record. A student prepared the box labels and affixed them to the containers. An archivist created the EAD and paper instances of the finding aid. At the end of the accessioning process, the addition was completely cataloged and useable by researchers and was not placed in our backlog. The guide to the Center for Information on America records can be accessed online at *http://mssa.library.yale. edu/findaids/stream.php?xmlfile=mssa.ms. 1855.xml.*

Four professionals, one support staff member, and one student spent a total of 320 minutes accessioning and cataloging these 16 linear feet, at an average of 20 minutes per linear foot. We ended up with a perfectly useable collection that will be in good shape for years to come and to which we will likely never return to do more work. While we do not expect all of our collections to be so straightforward, our work on the Center for Information on America records does show the possibilities of embracing the Greene/Meissner approach.

Even with these dedicated resources, however, our processing practices and expectations are evolving to meet the twin challenges posed by the backlog and acquisitions budget.

Working through this collection in such an efficient way also allowed us to do more detailed work on collections of greater research value; other archivists and staff processed high-profile collections relating to architect Eero Saarinen, activist and Yale chaplain William Sloane Coffin, Jr., journalist Louise Bryant, and diplomat William C. Bullitt. For three of these collections, we made a special effort to acquire funding to pay for the detailed work the collections received. And even these collections had sections that were not processed to as fine a level as they could have been.

We have also experimented, with some success, in getting donors to do more extensive work on their own collections. We have had donors rehouse collections, provide simple arrangement, and create inventories. On these occasions, our work gets reduced

to editing, quality control, box labeling, and bar coding for storage in our shelving facility and the incorporation of the inventory files into our finding aid system. Colleagues who work primarily with university archives holdings have had even more success with these methods, as they now require university offices to re-box materials and create folder-level inventories for all accessions, as a condition of the archives agreeing to take their records and provide services.

Crossing the Street: The Beinecke Library

In May 2006, I accepted a new position as Head of the Manuscript Unit at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, also at Yale. There I supervise a staff of 12 charged with gaining intellectual control over all of the library's nonprint holdings. I have inherited a backlog of nearly 13,000 feet of materials, very little of which is truly hidden, but to which access should be at least standardized. At the Beinecke, we have the rare instance of having enough resources to add staff and processing space, and we are in the midst of developing an off-site unit that will house an additional 6–8 staff members to work on archival collections.

Even with dedicated resources, however, our processing practices and expectations are evolving to meet the twin challenges posed by the backlog and acquisitions budget. We have begun to work with the curators who control acquisitions decisions to have them set priorities for the collections in their backlogs and to manage their expectations of the level of work that will get done on nonpriority collections. Our provisional plan is to attack the backlog on multiple fronts by having staff at all ranks process collections to different levels. We also plan to have the products of this work shared in the same systems, to eliminate the segregation of fully and partially processed collections. The end goal reflects the aims of the new processing methodology: to have a basic level of work done on all collections so they are represented at a collection level in our online catalog and at a container level in the finding aids database, while performing work at an appropriate level of detail for our highest priority collections.

Drawbacks

There are negative aspects to these approaches. We consciously put a heavier burden of discovery on the researcher, who must now plow through more materials to find desired documents. This concern is outweighed by the desire to expose the greatest number of collections to our users. Perhaps a greater concern is that public services staff members need to retrieve more boxes due to less granular description. This problem has a silver lining, though, in that we can track the most heavily used collections and use that data to make sensible decisions about which collections we should process in a more detailed manner.

Max Evans once said to me that we should call this type of work "extendable processing," rather than minimal processing, to get at the idea that we can always return to a collection to do more work to it. We also run the risk of losing "diamonds in the rough," valuable parts of collections that go unidentified. Similarly, without this identification, it becomes easier for undetected theft to occur. And finally, looking forward, collections processed only minimally provide a greater challenge to digitize. One of the ironies of the age is that while we must use less detail to deal with the mass increase in information, effective metadata for digitization projects requires greater specificity.

These issues all represent acceptable tradeoffs. While I do not have hard evidence, I can report that in my time as Head of Arrangement and Description in Manuscripts and Archives, where I also worked with readers on the reference desk, I never heard a researcher complain about our preliminary inventories, while I witnessed countless instances of readers finding useful materials in collections that were not fully processed. Moreover, adopting the minimum standards approach had a liberating effect on staff. Rather than having the 10- to 15-year backlog albatross hanging around our necks, we were able to make sensible decisions about how to use our resources wisely and strategically.

New Possibilities

Archivists should embrace new technologies and standards for description. Concerning the volume of modern records—and the backlogs they create—the largely theoretical work examining archival authority systems such as Encoded Archival Context shows great promise.

Given the current trend of doing less examination and description of actual records during processing, it will behoove our users and us if we can communicate the contexts in which records were created, to better enable them to make educated guesses about the location of records relevant to their research.

The idea of creating annotation systems to online finding aids provides potential to capture a greater level of description, which can be added by reference archivists and researchers at the time they encounter records. These annotations could then also be searched by researchers to further aid discovery. Archivists can learn much from work associated with the Web 2.0 movement by exploring the growth of folksonomies and the possibilities of applying social software to archival descriptive systems, such as projects like the University of Michigan's Polar Bear Expedition Digital Collection *(http://polarbears.si.umich.edu),* which allows users to provide commentary on finding aids and digital resources, and also employs recommender systems, like those used in common web sites such as *Amazon.com.* To this phenomenon of online social systems, the archivist can offer a perspective of seeing problems in a broader sense and breaking them down into component parts, moving from the general to the more specific.

Whether we admit it or not, archivists have been employing varied levels of description of their holdings for a very long time, and our work can potentially provide models for doing less work to more holdings in other areas. The archival concept of appraisal pushes us to put intellectual values on our holdings and to use those values to make decisions on necessary levels of work we do on them. As the movement sparked by the Greene/Meissner principles proceeds, we need to continue to experiment with and report on new models and also study how researchers react to the proposed changes, in order to hone our practices further. Rather than becoming outcasts in the profession as Greene and Meissner feared, their principles have hit the mainstream, with a packed session at the 2006 Society of American Archivists meeting and references to their work in other sessions as well. As for user studies, Merrilee Proffitt gave an excellent report on the users of the Research Libraries Group's (RLG) archives grid *(archivegrid.org),* which told us we should in fact prioritize effective description from the point of view of the researchers who were studied. Hopefully we can and will build on this work and continue to devise and share methods to expose our hidden collections and enhance access to our holdings in the most efficient ways possible.

When I spoke on this topic at the 2004 SAA annual meeting, I titled my paper "How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Backlog." I don't actually love the backlog, but I wanted to emphasize the semantics of backlogs. A sensible conceptual approach to a backlog that includes varied levels of processing and the development of reasonable expectations that we can communicate to users and staff lifts the burden of backlogs considerably. If we can succeed at getting a basic level of control over our holdings and make them available to users, it frees us to work on the richest of our collections. To push this idea a bit further, using the term backlog to describe these collections both misrepresents our realities to outsiders, thereby raising expectations unreasonably. It also discourages archivists, who feel we are always running to catch up or worse, failing. Perhaps the best way to make backlogs disappear is to stop calling them backlogs in the first place.

* * *

NHPRC AWARDS
GRANTS

NHPRC Awards $2.2 million in FY 2007 Grants and $3.1 million in FY 2006 Grants

In November 2006, the National Historical Publications and Records Commission recommended to the Archivist of the United States grants of $2.2 million for 35 projects in 20 states and the District of Columbia. These recommendations include $197,532 to the University of Wisconsin to design and implement a new Archives Leadership Institute and three grants totaling $230,113 for the digitization projects—two new initiatives.

The NHPRC also reviewed *Safeguarding a Nation's Identity*, a report from the Council of State Archivists. This report is the culmination of the first phase of a long-term initiative to address statewide emergency preparedness for archives and records throughout the nation. The project was supported by the National Archives, the NHPRC, assistance of the Office of National Security Coordination, and a generous donation from MyFamily.com, Inc.

At the November meeting, the Commission also welcomed its newest member, Nancy Davenport, formerly with the Library of Congress and the Council of Library and Information Resources, as an appointee of President George W. Bush. The NHPRC is one of the few Federal advisory boards with representatives from all three branches of the U.S. Government.

FY 2007 GRANTS
Publishing Historical Records
(Founding Era)
These long-term projects document major historical figures or groups from the Founding Era of the nation.

The John Adams Family Papers Massachusetts Historical Society	$112,931
The Papers of Benjamin Franklin, Yale University	$118,302
The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Princeton University	$118,329
The Papers of James Madison, University of Virginia	$106,945
The Papers of George Washington, University of Virginia	$106,639
The Documentary History of the First Federal Congress, The George Washington University	$179,703
The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution, University of Wisconsin	$162,341

Publishing Subventions
Grants to publishers to help defray the printing costs of individual volumes of documentary editions.

University of Virginia Press, *The Papers of James Madison, Secretary of State Series*, Vol. 8	$10,000
University of Virginia Press, *The Papers of George Washington, Presidential Series*, Vol. 13	$10,000
The Johns Hopkins University Press, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmstead*, Vol. 7	$10,000

Historical Documentary Editing Fellowships
Grants to allow editing projects to provide one-year graduate student fellowships.

Rutgers, the State University *The Thomas Edison Papers*	$55,000
Massachusetts Historical Society *The John Adams Family Papers*	$55,000

The Institute for Editing Historical Documents
Grant to support an ongoing training institute for documentary editing.

Wisconsin Historical Foundation, Inc.	$35,579

State Board Administrative Support
Grants to support the operations of State Historical Records Advisory Boards (SHRABs)—made either directly to the SHRAB or a fiscal agent.

Alaska Historical Records Advisory Board	$3,825
California Museum for History	$7,500
Florida Dept. of State, Division of Library & Information Services	$19,968
Georgia Office of Secretary of State	$9,994
Kentucky Historical Records Advisory Board	$10,000
Maine Historical Records Advisory Board	$20,000
Montana Historical Society	$9,275
New Mexico Commission on Public Records	$10,000
Ohio Historical Society	$10,000
Oklahoma Department of Libraries	$20,000
Utah State Archives and Records Services	$9,938
State Historical Society of Wisconsin	$14,380

State Collaborative and Regrant Projects

Grants support efforts to improve state-wide, regional, or national collaborations and services.

Council of State Archivists $64,625
To continue the project, Strengthening the National Archival Network Project.

North Carolina Department $52,365
of Cultural Resources
To support a two-year project for statewide Disaster Preparedness Training for archives.

South Carolina Department of $128,040
Archives and History
To support a 33-month statewide regrant and training project.

Electronic Records/Technologies Projects

Grants to support preservation of, and access to, electronic records archives.

Northern Maine Development $32,200
Commission
To support preserving electronic records in Northern Maine.

Michigan State University $189,067
To support a two-year project for the preservation of specialized electronic mailing list archives.

North Carolina Department $102,248
of Cultural Resources
To support a two-year effort, the Preservation of Electronic Mail Collaboration Initiative.

Digitizing Historical Records

Grants to support the mass digitization of historical records.

Troup County (Georgia) $75,000
Historical Society
To support a 17-month project for digitizing county court and government Records.

Archives of Michigan
$44,583
To support "Thank God for Michigan," digitizing statewide historical records.

Aldo Leopold Foundation, Inc. $110,530
To support a two-year project to digitize the papers of 20th-century ecologist and philosopher Aldo Leopold.

Archives Leadership Institute

A grant to support the creation and development of an institute for professional archival leadership.

Regents of the University $197,532
of Wisconsin
To support a three-year project to design and implement the Institute.

FY 2006 GRANTS

In May 2006, the National Historical Publications and Records Commission recommended to the Archivist of the United States grants of $3.1 million for 54 projects in 25 states and the District of Columbia.

Publishing Historical Records

These long-term projects document major historical figures or groups from U.S. history.

The Charles Carroll of Carollton $11,288
Family Papers
College of William & Mary

The Papers of Jefferson Davis $85,672
Rice University

The Frederick Douglass Papers $16,832
Indiana University

The Thomas Edison Papers $82,675
Rutgers, The State University
of New Jersey

Freedmen and Southern $77,453
Society Project, University
of Maryland

The Marcus Garvey and UNIA $54,070
Papers, University of California

Emma Goldman: $115,659
*A Documentary
History of the American Years*
University of California

The Samuel Gompers Papers $82,775
University of Maryland

The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant $79,764
Ulysses S. Grant Foundation

The Papers of Andrew Jackson $108,560
University of Tennessee

The Papers of John Jay $56,438
Columbia University

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers $74,272
Stanford University

The Lincoln Legal Papers $80,746
Illinois Historic Preservation
Agency

The Papers of George Catlett $39,130
Marshall
George C. Marshall
Foundation

The Papers of Clarence $45,150
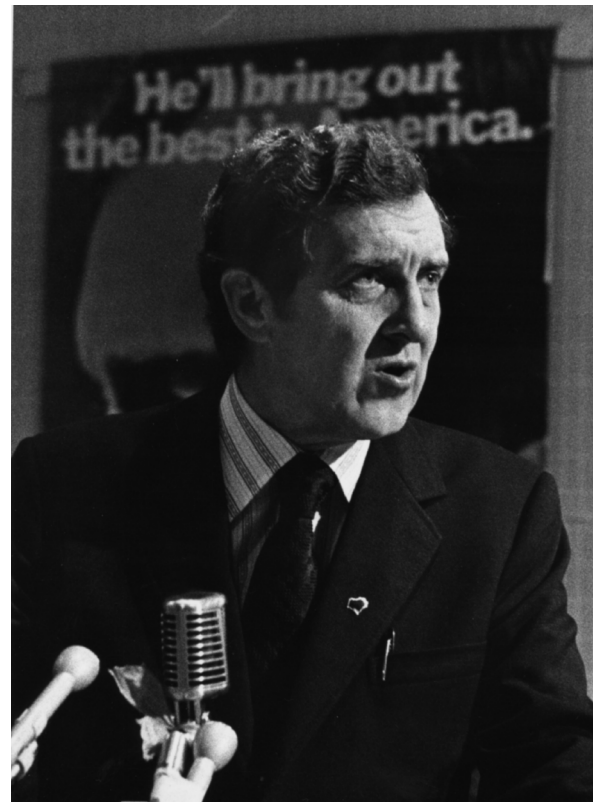*Mitchell, Jr.*
SUNY/ College at Old Westbury

O'odham-Pee Posh/ $36,833
Documentary
History of the Southwest
University of Arizona

Presidential Recordings $96,003
Project
University of Virginia

The Eleanor Roosevelt $189,180
Papers
The George Washington
University

The Selected Papers of $75,328
Margaret Sanger
New York University

The Papers of Stanton $45,150
and Anthony
Rutgers, The State
University of New Jersey

The Howard Thurman Papers $97,385
Morehouse College

Publishing Subventions

University of North $10,000
Carolina Press
Freedom: A Documentary
History of Emancipation,
Series 3, Vol. 1

University of Virginia Press $10,000
The Papers of Abraham
Lincoln: Legal Documents,
Vol. 1

University of Virginia Press $10,000
The Papers of Abraham
Lincoln: Legal Documents,
Vol. 2

University of Virginia Press $10,000
The Papers of Abraham
Lincoln: Legal Documents,
Vol. 3

University of Virginia Press $10,000
The Papers of Abraham
Lincoln: Legal Documents,
Vol. 4

Ohio University Press $10,000
The Private Life of Joseph
J. Mersman

Cambridge University Press $10,000
The Records of the Salem
Witch Hunt

Rutgers University Press $10,000
The Stanton/ Anthony Papers,
Vol. 4

State Board Administrative Support Projects

Grants to support the operations of State
Historical Records Advisory Boards
(SHRABs)—made either directly to the
SHRAB or a fiscal agent.

Alabama Department of $9,728
Archives and History

Arizona Historical Records $5,355
Advisory Board

Indiana Commission on $10,000
Public Records

Friends of the Missouri $4,983
State Archives

Nevada State Library $10,000
and Archives

New Mexico Commission on $9,998
Public Records

Oregon Secretary of State, $5,505
Archives Division

South Dakota Heritage Fund $8,574

Wyoming Dept. of State Parks $10,000
& Cultural Resources

Archives and Records Projects

Grants support efforts to preserve and
make public important historical records
held by local archives.

University of Alabama $148,183
Tuscaloosa, AL
To support "Bringing Alabama's
African American History to
Light," a partnership with
Tuskegee University to organize,
describe, and make available
approximately 670 linear feet
of currently inaccessible African
American collections on both
campuses.

Art Center College of Design, $51,540
Pasadena, CA
To support its efforts to develop
a comprehensive archives
and records management
program.

ONE Archives $194,860
Los Angeles, CA
To arrange, describe, preserve,
and make public some 767
linear feet of materials
constituting 99 archival or
manuscript collections relating
to efforts to obtain recognition
and subsequently to establish
rights for gay and lesbian
Americans in the 20th century.

Regents of the University of $67,487
California, Berkeley, CA
To support the second year of
the Kem Lee Photograph
Archives Project.

Kentucky Historical Society, **$33,549**
Frankfort, KY
*To support the second year of
its Registers & Rosters: Processing
Business and Military Records
in the Bluegrass State project.*

Northeastern University **$84,729**
Boston, MA
*To support the second year
of its African American and
Latino History project.*

Sterling & Francine Clark **$143,050**
Art Institute, Williamstown, MA
*To process the personal papers
of Sterling Clark, businessman
and art collector, and the
institutional records of the
Institute. The Sterling Clark
Papers, which cover the period
1912–1950 and total 83 linear
feet, include correspondence,
diaries, journals related to art
purchases, records of early
appraisals of works of art,
receipts, and glass plate negatives.*

President and Trustees of Bates **$65,000**
College, Lewiston, ME
*To preserve and make
available the Edmund S.
Muskie Papers.*

Princeton University **$58,652**
Princeton, NJ
*To support the second year
of its processing project for
the Papers of American
Economists.*

Seneca Nation of Indians **$30,000**
Salamanca, NY
*To support the development
of its tribal archives and records
management program.*

Hebrew Union College/Jewish **$61,152**
Institute of Religion
Cincinnati, OH
*To support the second year
of its World Jewish Congress
Collection Project.*

Medical University of South **$75,633**
Carolina, Charleston, SC
*To arrange, describe, and make
more accessible to the public 93
manuscript collections consisting
of 238 cubic feet of records
relating to medical history and
the health profession in
South Carolina.*

Harris County, Houston, TX **$42,369**
*To appraise, arrange, describe,
and develop a protocol for
providing access to confidential
or restricted information for
about 500 cubic feet of records
documenting the functions
of the county's Juvenile Pro-
bation Department from
circa 1907 to 1960.*

Museum of Fine **$101,995**
Arts, Houston
Houston, TX
*To support a three-year pro-
ject to process and make
available 402 linear feet of
archival material.*

Senator Edmund Muskie cam-
paigns for President in 1972. A
grant to Bates College in Maine will
help preserve the Edmund S.
Muskie Papers. Photo courtesy The
Edmund S. Muskie Archives and
Special Collections Library.

Texas Tech University **$48,565**
Lubbock, TX
*To support, on behalf of
its Vietnam Archive, a project
to process and preserve
135 linear feet of the papers
of the Families of Vietnamese
Political Prisoners Association
(FVPPA).*

American Heritage Center **$142,901**
Laramie, WY
*To support the second year
of the Center at the University
of Wyoming in its "Beating
Backlogs through Cataloging
and Deaccessioning Project."*

He'll bring out
the best in America.

ROTHSTEIN
DAVENPORT

Commission Welcomes Davenport, Rothstein

At the commission's November 2006 meeting, the Archivist of the United States swore in new Commissioner Nancy A. Davenport, who was appointed by President George W. Bush. Ms. Davenport's career has long focused on national issues in service to libraries, their collections, and reasoned policy making to create a learning society. Most recently the President of the Council on Libraries and Information Resources, Ms. Davenport has a distinguished history of public service with the Library of Congress. Beginning with the Congressional Research Service in 1985, she held a series of progressively higher positions, including stints as the Chief of Rare Books and Special Collections and as Director of Acquisitions from 1998 to 2004.

In 2006 Ms. Davenport was named Interim Director of Library Services for the District of Columbia Public Library, and she continues as the principal for Nancy Davenport & Associates, LLC. A graduate of West Virginia University, she received her Masters of Library Sciences from the University of Pittsburgh. She is a member of the American Library Association, the Public Library Association, the editorial board of the Journal of Library Administration, and the board of directors of the National Information Standards Organization, and she has served on the board of trustees for the Digital Library Federation, the Steering Committee of the U.S.-China Library Conference, and represented the Librarian of Congress on the National Commission on Library and Information Sciences.

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Chief Justice John Roberts has appointed Judge Barbara Jacobs Rothstein to the Commission as representative of the U.S. Supreme Court. Judge Rothstein is Director of the Federal Judicial Center and a United States District Court Judge for the Western District of Washington. She was appointed in 1980 and served as chief judge of that district from 1987 to 1994. She was in private practice in Boston, 1966–68; Assistant Attorney General, State of Washington, 1968–77; and Judge, Superior Court, King County, Washington, 1977–80.

She has served on the faculty at the Law School of the University of Washington, 1975–77; the Hastings Institute of Trial Advocacy, 1977; the Northwest Institute of Trial Advocacy, 1979; and has been a member of the state-Federal committee of the U.S. Judicial Conference, and chair of the subcommittee on health reform. She received her legal degree from Harvard University.

New Commission member Nancy Davenport is flanked by Archivist Allen Weinstein (left) and NHPRC Executive Director Max Evans at her swearing-in ceremony.

Col. George E. Stewart, commanding American forces in Northern Russia, passing by convoy through village of Chamova on his return from Dwina River front at Toulgas to Archangel, December 31, 1918. The University of Michigan's Polar Bear Expedition Digital Collection documents the American intervention in Northern Russia and uses "social software" to add depth to the collections. See "More for Less" for more details.