

Arizona Archives Summit, Jan. 29-30, 2009

Report prepared by Mary Melcher, Historian

The Arizona Archives Summit convened on January 29, 2009 in the new Polly Rosenbaum State Archives Building with the ambitious goal of creating cooperation among archives across Arizona in order to preserve the state's historical record. The National Historical Publications and Records Commission and the Institute of Museum and Library Services funded the meeting. Leaders of the State Archives, (Melanie Sturgeon), ASU Archives and Special Collections, (Rob Spindler), Arizona Historical Foundation (Linda Whitaker) and NAU Cline Library (Karen Underhill) organized the conference and contacted the three consultants who led the sessions. Mark Greene, director of the American Heritage Center in Laramie, Wyoming, Greg Thompson, head of Special Collections at the University of Utah, and Tim Ericson, a retired archivist and archival educator from University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee contributed their expertise in collections management and development and in creating cooperation between different archives.

Invitations went out to twenty-six archival repositories throughout the state, including four tribal archives. Approximately 25 people from all over the state attended the Summit, including archivists and employees from the following institutions: Sharlot Hall Museum; Jerome Historical Society; Lowell Observatory; Museum of Northern Arizona; Northern Arizona University's Cline Library; Arizona Historical Society in Tucson; University of Arizona, Special Collections; Arizona State Museum; Arizona State University, Special Collections; the State Archives; the Arizona Historical Foundation; the Tempe Historical Museum; and the Bisbee Mining and Historical Museum. These attendees work with large and small collections and hail from rural and urban areas

across the state. Unfortunately, the three archivists from tribal archives who had indicated they were coming were unable to attend the Summit.

Melanie Sturgeon, Arizona's State Archivist, welcomed the participants and briefly outlined the goals of the Summit while posing the questions, "Why you? Why this meeting? Why now?" She explained that the Summit organizers had contacted archivists from across the state who worked with large and small collections. The date of this meeting in early 2009 is significant because Arizona's Centennial is in 2012, providing opportunities for archivists to promote and advance their programs as they make more materials available to the public. There is a need for greater cooperation between the state's archives because all are facing budget cuts, backlogs, gaps and split collections. At the same time, even as archivists cope with these difficulties, they want to provide improved access. Sturgeon also briefly outlined other goals of the Summit:

- To discuss the ethics of collecting
- Encourage the updating and sharing of collections policies
- Demonstrate the relationships between the scope of our collecting, the ethical and material costs of inefficient preservation and processing and the need to align our programs with the resources available
- Provide resources and promote discussion about these topics so that attendees will acquire new knowledge to take home and implement in daily practice
- Update collections policies listed on the Cultural Inventory Project in response to this meeting.
- Establish connections for an on-going conversation about archival collecting

Thursday Morning—Mark Greene

In Mark Greene's presentation, "Cooperative Collection Development: Some Thoughts for the 21st Century," he discussed his experiences as director of the American Heritage Center (AHC) at the University of Wyoming. There he inherited a repository with thousands of collections from all over the United States which had been collected with no guiding policy. Through the development and implementation of a new

collections policy, the AHC dealt with a huge backlog and deaccessioned to other repositories collections that fell outside their new guidelines. At this time, they have no backlog, in the sense that they have some form of description for all of their holdings.

Because there is too much material for any one repository to collect and process in a given geographic area, Greene advocates cooperative collecting to enable assembly of the most diverse and complete historical record possible. A collections policy is necessary to narrow the scope of collecting, but according to his research less than 50 per cent of repositories have one. While existing policies often detail how to collect, the process (legal instruments) of collecting, and means of providing access, appraisal, and deaccession, few collections policies actually define the scope of collecting. Passive collecting makes it easier in the short run, but creates problems later on. Archivists' tendency to save collections from destruction hampers their ability to develop a focused collections policy. They will improve their archives by accepting only collections relevant to their geographic location, institution and collections policy. By analyzing their own repositories, including the collections' strengths and weaknesses, archivists will be able to reduce their backlog and better serve researchers. A good collections policy takes into account other archives' holdings, while also lessening the backlog because a specific repository will not collect material unless staff has time to process it. There are costs associated with following the status quo including gaps in collecting and backlogs that in turn undermine an organization's stature.

Greene described the following positive aspects related to development and use of a focused collection policy:

- Demonstrates professionalism
- Permits the repository to accurately allocate resources to collections goals

- Provides the possibility of cooperative collecting
- Allows archivists to refuse a collection politely, but firmly and effectively, if it does not fit the guidelines
- Helps archivists to know when to accept a collection.
- Permits archivists to routinely deaccession material that no longer fits
- Allows staff to determine success in documentation of subject areas
- Permits flexibility, reassessment, and recalibration as time passes
- Most effectively serves the mission and clientele of the repository

Greene's research center deaccessioned 350 collections, but angered only three donors who were appeased once they understood that the collections policy had dictated the decision. He further explained that collections guidelines should include analyzing subgroups. For example, the policy might exclude constituent correspondence from 20th century members of Congress or detail which kinds of businesses records an archives will collect.

Greene's staff is made up of 12 full-time archivists. He described the following steps undertaken by AHC staff in developing and implementing a collections policy:

- 1) Beginning a series of task forces, each taking roughly six months and each focused on one or more topical collecting area, which would then be cataloged and reappraised
- 2) Implementation of More Product, Less Process (MPLP)
- 3) Use of Wisconsin Historical Society's collection analysis from the 1980s, amended to AHC's needs. (**Side Note:** Collections and policies are all available online at <http://ahc.uwyo.edu/usearchives/default.htm>)
- 4) Analysis by each task force of the quantity and quality of holdings, breaking down collections into more workable sub-categories
- 5) Search for other repositories with collections related to AHC's, to find ways they might intersect and analysis of use records for major sub-categories, to determine what best served curricular interests
- 6) Task force recommendation of collecting policies for some sub-categories and deaccessioning for others
- 7) Location of repositories with collections related to their holdings, allowing for elimination of dozens of collections that were national in scope. An analysis of their own user groups helped to determine what to keep and what to give away.
- 8) Actively keeping management informed of the process as it unfolds-

The new policy allowed identification of collections that needed to be cataloged and processed. Over 1,000 collections were eliminated from back log with 77 percent being deaccessioned, and 55 percent transferred to other repositories. They decided to review their policy every five years. Their priority is currently focused on honing the actively collected topical areas, including under-documented communities.

Thursday Morning—Tim Ericson

Tim Ericson’s presentation, “Surviving Cooperation, or the Top Ten Lessons Learned from Two Cooperative Collection Development Projects,” involved discussion of two projects in Wisconsin (“State Historical Society of Wisconsin: Documenting Wisconsin and the Trans-Mississippi West, Loaning Manuscript Collections” and “Documenting Metropolitan Milwaukee”). Ericson stated that in Wisconsin, collections can be loaned from one repository to another. He then made the following points:

- 1) Cooperation takes an investment of time—it’s useful, but not free.
- 2) Cooperation requires institutional support because priorities must be set in order to eliminate collections outside of the collections policy’s scope.
- 3) The most important step is to clarify incentives for cooperation.
- 4) All repositories have different perspectives and goals, and one hundred percent agreement is not necessary for cooperation to succeed.
- 5) Even in a cooperative system, some overlap is inevitable, but archivists should try to minimize it.
- 6) Problems often develop because institutional priorities usually trump cooperative ones.
- 7) Even in the best cooperative system, it won’t be possible to plug every gap in documentation because repositories may not want to take responsibility for documenting an undocumented subject.
- 8) Cooperation should include an analytical element to improve accessioning procedures and descriptive practices; to create documentation and reference materials for old collections; to illustrate bias in collections; and eliminate out-of-scope collections.
- 9) Cooperation is an ongoing activity that requires sustained communication both externally and internally.
- 10) Cooperation requires defining the activities that will comprise it. Will it involve sharing information about holdings? Sharing leads on collections? Relocating out-of-scope collections? Loaning collections or combining them physically?

Greg Thompson stressed the importance of cooperation as archives face budget cuts and the need to increase efforts to receive state and federal funding due to the economic recession. People must learn to talk to each other and understand that cooperative outcomes will take time.

Thompson described the earlier competitive collections environment in Utah and his desire to pull archivists together when he began working there in the 1980s. They needed to begin communicating with the large Mormon archives [the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints]. When archivists began to meet a few times a year in an informal setting to avoid infighting, they found a lack of knowledge of what each institution was collecting. The development of collaborative projects requiring outside funding built the process of communication. These projects helped to open up the academic community and created a positive atmosphere. Their meetings resulted in the *Utah Manuscript Association*, which has no charter, no bylaws, no formal legal structure but has helped overcome the massive competition. This association worked wonders for the larger institutions (universities, etc.) that had the resources to make a positive change.

Technology in the past twelve to fifteen years has combined with the concept of togetherness and communication to create great new outcomes in Utah. Through cooperation, the process of collecting becomes much more fluid and natural. Thompson described major Utah projects resulting from collaboration:

- Utah digital newspaper project, the most significant digital collection in the state
- Digitization of private papers, such as trail diaries from the 1800s
- Utah Native American Digital Archives documents the six tribes in the state
- The Mountain West Digital Library holds digital archives and has become a key player in holding LDS sources
- Development of a statewide initiative to create EAD guides and registers for the online holdings relating to about 7,700 collections across the state.

Cooperative development is the name of the game to survive in these times because these projects pull people together, force them to look at their overlaps and to work cooperatively.

Mark Greene: “Throwing the Vacuum Cleaner into Reverse: The American Heritage Center as a Case Study of Reappraisal and Deaccessioning as Collection Management”

The process of collecting widely without a collection plan or ability to process collections resulted in an 85,000 cubic foot backlog at the American Heritage Center. Even grant money did not allow AHC to begin to wade through this morass. Only 20% of collections were electronically catalogued in 2000, compared to 46% on average nationally. Thirty-five percent of the total collection was entirely unprocessed. The administration viewed the archives negatively and as a warehouse.

Greene and staff created a collections policy, reappraised their collections, transferred many to other repositories and even destroyed some items because they did not fit the plan and could not be housed anywhere else. Over 400 collections were reviewed of which 77% were deaccessioned, totaling 13,300 cubic feet. Fifty-five percent of de-accessions were transferred to other institutions, 8% were returned to donors, and 9% were destroyed. Institutions are hesitant to destroy in lieu of continuing attempts to transfer or return collections, but the time and effort spent working with homeless collections could be better used on worthwhile collections. They transferred collections to 164 institutions in 42 states and 6 countries. Greene found that grant money could be used to pay for some of the shipping costs, and sometimes the cost was split between institutions.

In Greene's discussion of "Reappraisal and Deaccessioning, the Larger Context," he stated that reappraisal does not necessarily lead to deaccessioning, and deaccessioning does not always lead to the landfill. When necessary by deed of gift (or lack thereof) donors are contacted first and notified about deaccessioning procedures and possible outcomes. In order to transfer material, clear titles are necessary. Also, archivists need to be familiar with state laws regarding abandoned property.

Many in the archival profession are unwilling or unable to confront and discuss the topic of reappraisal and deaccessioning. The limited literature focused on these topics tends to create heat and not much light. However, once difficult conversations are embraced, they are not as negative as they may seem to be. When reappraisal and deaccessioning will provide an outcome equal to or greater than the input of resources, it should be pursued. It is necessary to have a paper trail and separate policies for reappraisal and de-accessioning. There are ethics statements available from the American Association of Museums which can serve as a model. Old collections that are no longer useful may not be worth the resources required to maintain them. However, use patterns are only one element of how a collection is assessed. AHC has never deaccessioned a collection simply because it is not used, especially if it has only recently received a catalog online. There must be a rational set of guidelines which can be explained to donors, justifying decisions based on official policies.

Archivists often worry about the impact of deaccessioning, fearing that if a scholar cited a document and it is deaccessioned, they won't be able to prove the research was actually done. They fear negative repercussions from the donor. However, donors may respond well if actions are explained rationally and follow the law, are backed up by

policy documents, and archivists act above board and in good faith. The archivist's job is to make wise choices and to do the best they can for their collections, researchers and institutions.

Karen Underhill, Coordinator for Special Collections and Archives at NAU's Cline Library, spoke briefly concerning her archives, which is a user-driven facility. Policies and actions around deaccessioning must be defensible and transparent. She has seen universities and major repositories refer donors to each other. She outlined some of the benefits of relocating collections, such as reciprocity (receiving collections or donor referrals in return). User-driven requests are always digitized and put online for easier access. Repatriation of materials is good and should not be feared.

Break-out Session: Reappraisal and Deaccessioning

Summit attendees broke into small groups to consider an archival problem involving a split collection. At a public university, FUSC, a split collection related to Cowboy Cal had been minimally processed when staff was contacted by special collections staff from another university, (LSU) which had similar material from the very same cowboy. LSU has more cubic feet related to the cowboy, and they requested that FUSC deaccession their collection and send it to them. No one knows how or why the collection was split. Cowboy Cal attended LSU as an undergraduate, but their collection has not been processed and is part of a large backlog. In addition, this university is experiencing budget problems and cuts in staff. They ask that FUSC pay the shipping costs associated with uniting the collection.

Summit attendees considered this dilemma, working together to discuss the theoretical and difficult decisions archivists need to make regarding collections, policies, scopes, accessioning, and deaccessioning. People discussed the following ethical considerations:

- Do not accept collections unless there are resources for processing.
- Maintain integrity of collections.
- Consider which archives has more researchers using this collection.

One possible solution was to digitize the collection in order to bring it together. Some attendees said that they would repatriate their part of the collection if they were from FUCS because the cowboy had attended LSU, but they were concerned that it would remain unprocessed. All agreed it was a thorny issue requiring thought and communication.

In consideration of another issue, other groups discussed FUSC's collection of diaries of a renowned environmentalist who worked nearby. FUSC has his diaries, the papers of two other environmentalists and dozens of environmental collections. Although FUSC has had the diaries for 10 years, they have not been processed. The environmentalist decided to donate his family correspondence to Coastal State University and offers his scientific files to another repository, Mountain University (MU), where he worked. By 2000, both FUSC and Mountain University have processed the collections. The collection is split between three institutions—how should this dilemma be handled?

Attendees discussed the following options:

- combining all collections at the environmentalist's workplace, MU
- creating linkage through guides or digital information
- giving the diaries to the donor
- talking to the donor about the decisions he had made and digitizing the diaries

People considered the following issues: deeds of gift which appeared to be in order; scope of other collections and their fit in each repository; the content of the family

papers; the volume of each collection and the geographic proximity which might lead to sharing; and the use of all three collections at the different facilities. One attendee stated that dealing with the donor's ego was a major concern and doing so would help facilitate a solution. The break-out session provided a means for attendees to wrestle with some of the difficult issues involved in collecting.

Arizona Archives Collection Policies Discussion

Mark Greene, Tim Ericson, and Greg Thompson led a round-table discussion surrounding the collection development policies submitted by eleven different repositories in advance of the meeting to Rob Spindler, of ASU Libraries. The development of a good collections policy requires understanding the organization's mission, those being served and a definition of topics to be documented by the policy. Greene found that several of the Arizona archives collection policies were too vague and broad while two came closer to a level of specificity that would actually help an institution keep its focus. After distributing an outline which he has compiled to help institutions define their written policies, Greene discussed the Wisconsin Historical Society's assessment program, which he believes is a good starting point for other institutions. In addition, it is adaptable and conducive to collaborative collecting. Through careful consideration of opportunities, institutions may find possible ways to cooperate. Organizations may also find instances where they cannot agree, especially in terms of who will take on what collections.

Greg Thompson stated that if different archives work with a common language, it provides a perfect point for launching a cooperative collection program. Larger institutions need to aid smaller institutions whose resources and staff are more limited. In

order to develop an “Arizona Collection Policy” encompassing many institutions, negotiation and communication will be necessary, especially since each institution has its own ‘turf’ and favored aspects of collection. Thinking about collections in an “apples to apples, oranges to oranges” way will open up communication, allowing institutions to treat each other as equal players. Meetings, like the Summit can affect major events, such as the upcoming Centennial. Summit attendees have a pivotal role in the representation of Arizona’s history, and this responsibility begins with the policy statements.

Because the Arizona collection policies were not detailed, the consultants could not determine if significant overlap existed. However, since people came together to discuss collaborative collection, there is an attempt to change things. The next step is to establish a timeline and goal for a draft policy that crosses boundaries of organizations. Greene suggested using the WHS model to address where participating institutions fall into the scheme of collection policies.

According to the consultants, some subjects are missing from the collections policies such as science, medicine, technology, and tourism. Organized sports and recreational activities-based collecting are included, but should be rethought and expanded some, due to their global impact. Karen Underhill mentioned the need for greater participation and collaboration with the Native American communities in the state.

Thompson discussed adding patron input into the collection policies. Patrons and academics provide perspectives about what is important that the archivists may not see. He created an initiative to draft an assessment and revision of the collection policy at his institution, which was in an area heavily involved in medical research. They built an

engineering/medical/science club, and members had to receive national and international recognition for their writing, research, or work. Also, those who were native, trained, or worked in Utah could join the club. There were 250 people meeting the criteria, and the institution actively sought their papers and documents, while also creating an oral history project. Beginning with a \$3500 grant, they were able to raise a third of a million dollars, and it changed the way Utah's archival work was viewed in the national sense.

Attendees discussed the documentation of minority communities and the ASU Chicano/a Collection, which is one of the largest collections related to the Latino/a in spite of the general ignorance of Latino/a impact on U.S. history, particularly in the Southwest. Collections policies should be refined to include this aspect of history. Smaller, local historical museums/institutions (Jerome, Bisbee) can make important contributions to documenting diverse cultures in their local communities. Rob Spindler mentioned the perception of cultural imperialism on the part of large institutions that collected archives of local communities. The larger and more influential institutions should assist the smaller ones in representing the diverse populations and their local history. Arizona's cultural diversity could possibly be examined and documented as a legacy project for the Arizona Centennial. The group also discussed documenting migration of all ethnic groups, in and out of Arizona, and from the rest of the United States. (See the Why Arizona Centennial project at www.whyarizona.org .)

The group discussed formal versus informal collecting. A formal, written collection policy is required for collaboration, so that archivists will know to whom to refer a potential donor. After the formal policy is in place, the informal conversation can begin. But where does a macro, umbrella policy rest? Greene's involvement in a collaborative

collection policy did not include an umbrella policy. Individual institutions are generally interested in what their strengths or defined purposes are and less in how it comes together as a whole; but in learning what aspects of history/collecting other institutions are focused on, the level of awareness creates an abstract whole. There is a limit to the number of things that can be addressed – it is not possible to collect and process *every* aspect of Arizona history.

In a discussion of how institutions could learn to better function as a group, several comments focused on communicating through meetings or email, taking a bilingual approach; and involving schools. Attendees discussed the nature of the categories outlined in the Wisconsin model in relation to Arizona history, and their ability to cross ethnic and racial boundaries. The consultants responded that the framework they're using has been divided into a series of subcategories that they figure is only the tip of the iceberg. However, a good collecting policy does not have to be absurdly long; it should simply reflect an institution's goals.

Second Break-out Session—Thursday Afternoon

In the Second Break-out Session, participants considered another case study related to a donation. The Society of African American Veterans (SAAV) donated a collection to the Sagamore County Historical Society (SCHS), but after 40 years, it was not processed and members of the organization did not have free access to the collection. An officer of the organization approached another archivist at the Sagamore Regional Archives (SRA), who was a friend of his. The officer asked if SRA would be interested in the collection, if they reclaimed it from SCHS. They are also considering donating more material to one of the archives. He is wondering if SRA would accept the records. If SRA would not

accept all of the records, would it accept a new installment of their recent records? SRA already has an excellent collection of military history, and these records would enhance the repository; however, there are ethical and political issues involved in this scenario. Attendees discussed this situation, along with forgery, theft and the sale of historical documents before wrapping up and adjourning for the day.

Friday Morning—Continuation of Break-out Session

The SAAV collection and where the collection should be housed fueled the discussion on Friday morning. Attendees discussed the following ethical issues:

- care and access to collections
- criticizing another archives
- accepting collections even if an archives is not able to process them
- encouraging bad donor behavior
- splitting collections
- does an archivist have a duty to advocate for the records and their accessibility?

Political issues considered were the following:

- Does the officer have the authority to move the collection?
- Does the issue warrant potential conflict with the other repository and possible negative press portrayal?

Participants stressed that the approach of the SRA archivist could have a direct effect on the relationships between all three organizations. Also, they did not want to alienate the African American community who may feel that their collections are not valued enough as an undocumented and minority population.

To create solutions, it is important to involve upper-level administration. There were a variety of options discussed including the following:

- doing nothing and hoping for an eventual donation of the remaining collections
- communicating with the other institution to get an official agreement about the transfer of the collections from SCHS to SRA
- acquiring a formal deed of gift from the donor
- bringing all three parties together for a meeting to discuss the situation

- communicating with the African American community.
- turning it into a positive outcome by celebrating the legacy of the African American veterans in some kind of joint community celebration with possible fund-raising and positive press.
- The best case scenario may involve SCHS giving up the collection to SRA. Baring that, perhaps SRA should accept more recent records, so that at least researchers would have access to part of the entire collection.

Consultants' Analysis of Backlog Surveys in Arizona Repositories

The consultants found that politics, government, and business related collections have the largest backlogs, which commonly occurs everywhere because these are some of the largest and most complicated collections. Other categories of collections included Community and Family and a surprising number of Science and Technology collections. The average backlog was 42% and the mean backlog 40%, which is about the same as the national average. Help with business collections is available in the provided bibliography, with articles by Greene and Daniels-Howell which will aid in re-conceptualizing a collection. The best solution is More Product, Less Processing (MPLP). Although the survey does not tell us how long the backlogs have existed, no amount of backlog is acceptable. Everything in a repository should be intellectually accessible to the public.

Sometimes unprocessed collections can provide a fundraising opportunity. Attendees discussed whether or not to tell donors that they can get a collection processed more quickly by making a donation. Greene feels that one should not initially talk about money with donors because donors should feel that they will accept the collection whether funds are given or not. One Arizona repository, however, cannot accept large collections without funds. Many donors will understand that collection processing takes money. In relation to copying material for donors, some repositories provide copies

while others allow donors to borrow the material and make copies. To digitize material is not always possible because it's expensive.

Thompson suggested automatically separating all the printed material to significantly reduce the backlog. Institutions may partner together to acquire funds to address their backlogs, especially if their collections are similar in nature. They can also utilize the labor of interns, and there may be external grants for processing.

Friday Morning—Greene presents “Efficient and Minimal Processing Options”

Archival processing does not keep pace with the growth of collections, and backlogs continue to grow resulting in researchers being denied access. This damages the image of repositories with donors and with those who allocate resources. More product, less process, (MPLP) is an alternative to traditional processing, discussed in the Greene/Meissner article. The archival profession's definition of processing is no longer suitable or sustainable for large, contemporary collections. We must redefine processing by re-envisioning what is ideal and necessary. Because traditional processing is too fixated on item level tasks, preservation anxieties have trumped user needs. Doing tasks such as removing paper clips and staples does not actually significantly increase the longevity of the items. There is only a weak commitment to online access and description which is not at the item level.

Traditional processing rates at the item level require 4-40 hours per cubic foot of material. A survey of grant projects found that processing took 6-67 hours per cubic foot. A survey of archivists determined that they spend 2-250 hours per cubic foot.

Repositories should establish an acceptable minimal level of work as a benchmark. It is not necessary to apply the same level of processing to every collection or to every part

of a collection; some will take longer and others less time. Under MPLP, arrangement should not take place below the series level, and not all series and files in a collection need to be arranged to the same level. Description, which is brief and simple, should take place at the series level. Instead of being a research project, this is an effort to make the collection accessible to researchers as quickly as possible. The level of description should vary across collections and components of a collection based on its significance, frequency of use, organization, and size.

To conserve collections, archivists should rely on storage area environmental controls to carry the conservation and preservation burden. Resources are not available to worry about staples and paper clips, particularly with the Southwest's dry climate. Greene advised not worrying about conservation at a lower level than one performs arrangement and description. Because refolding takes two-thirds of the time involved in conservation, physically sound folders don't need to be replaced.

In terms of time spent in MPLP, an average of 4 hours per cubic foot is a reasonable target. Calculating the cost savings of this method is perhaps less useful than talking about the increase in productivity and accessibility.

Through a NHPRC grant, the AHC created collection level records for the unprocessed collections, using an extreme form of MPLP. They worked with 700 collections in two years, using two people per year, but did not process the collections. They were put into Worldcat, which made the collections more accessible. They also developed a protocol to deal with researchers' questions which were unanswerable by the catalog description alone. By doing the collections-level processing first, they were able to focus future efforts on processing collections that researchers actually use, rather than

spending resources on collections that are perhaps less useful and in-demand. Reference staff made descriptions for every two feet or less. For the larger collections, they created descriptions at the box level, often using student labor.

By surveying researchers about MPLP through H-Net and a variety of other sources, the AHC received responses from people involved in business, university faculty, and graduate students. Respondents ranked online catalog records as the most useful resources, with collection inventories second, indicating that collection-level catalog records will reach a high proportion of researchers. Most respondents were positive about the MPLP practice. Greene believes that most researchers care more about basic descriptions for all collections than details and organization.

Under minimal processing, photos don't need to be separated or sleeved individually. However, there is a different set of concerns in high humidity areas. Archivists must selectively address issues—when one needs to do more detailed work to preserve the collections, it should be done. Photos are not inherently more important than textual materials to the point where they require item level care and description. The same applies to sound and moving images and electronic records. This is especially important for small staffs and lone arrangers. MPLP requires that every collection be evaluated to determine the appropriate level of arrangement and description. If one has the resources, it makes sense to go back and do a more detailed job later.

There is a new category of NHPRC Basic Processing grants, created to establish standard accessioning and processing practices that will prevent future backlogs. Greene stressed the need to revise collections development policies, if necessary, and deaccession unsuitable collections. Repositories must have all of their collections

described at a basic level before they may qualify for Detailed Processing grants from NHPRC.

In summary, MPLP means appraisal at the series or possibly folder level, not at the item level. Archivists can use accessioning to create catalog records. In relation to digitization, scanning at lower resolutions and providing metadata at the folder level allows more content to go online in less time, and for less money. Then staff can wait to do high resolution scanning until it's requested. MPLP means pulling more boxes, but it will still reduce the total work.

In response to Greene's presentation, Ericson discussed MPLP which he supports, with reservations. He has saved a lot of space by removing duplicates and blank paper. Thompson also has a few reservations about the process, but he has used aspects of it for several years due to university budgetary and legal pressures. Every collection that is accepted by the University of Utah receives a description and is made available. They also immediately remove duplicates to save space. They separate manuscripts, photographs and other media, and published material is removed. He has had difficulties related to not having enough metadata in the past. There is tension between having collections speedily available and having them thoroughly processed. Some collections require more processing for security reasons.

According to Karen Underhill, processing a collection too quickly can lead to problems, if material is not thoroughly reviewed. At NAU, they have done MPLP-type processing on a large collection of photographs, while they more carefully scan and describe the presidents' collections. The basic principle is that once it's been open to one,

it's opened to all. To enhance security, they use colored photo copier paper in the archives. Collections exist to be used, and they are not a warehouse.

Greg Thompson and Rob Spindler also commented that there is a tension between the collective descriptive practices of archivists and the item-level descriptive practices of digital librarians. The first step should be the broad description, and selective item level description may follow for development of digital libraries as resources are made available. However, metadata from collective description may be inadequate for digital collections, because the diversity of digital file formats and the sheer quantity of digital materials require automated preservation actions which depend on detailed metadata.

Third Break-out Session: Implementing MPLP

This break-out session provided time for attendees to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of MPLP. The advantages include the following:

- The process allows the freedom to make decisions as circumstances warrant
- It may provide greater access, making more collections available quickly to the public.

The disadvantages include the following:

- Private material may be made available to the public.
- Unidentified photos may remain unidentified.
- Current collections may bring potential problems.

Despite these disadvantages, most seem comfortable with many MPLP, with the exception of throwing away unlabeled items. Most feel that the speed is worth the risks involved because making collections available is very important. Later archivists can go back and process a specific collection more thoroughly.

Melanie Sturgeon made a plea to return government documents acquired by other repositories to the State Archives. One reason for this is so official records can be certified and used in court proceedings. In addition, this is the law.

4th Break-out Session: Connecting Cooperative Collection Development, Deaccessioning and Efficient Processing

Small groups gathered and discussed the incentives related to cooperative collection development, deaccessioning and processing. The following incentives were discussed:

- better access for researchers
- limiting overlap and competition
- filling gaps in the historical record
- promoting unity and cooperation and following the law
- cooperative collection development allows professionals to learn more about their own collections and those of others
- provides an incentive to refine and follow an organization's mission statement and provides the opportunity to refine the collection scope
- frees up space for relevant collections
- cooperative collecting could lead to better donor-institution relationships and the opportunity for referrals.

The obstacles to implementing cooperative collection development include the following:

- lack of knowledge about others' collections
- others' lack of knowledge about their own collections
- distance and geography
- money, staff, and time limits; egos and territorialism
- legacy and politics
- gaining approval of the higher level administration and boards
- legal issues with the deeds of gift and donor's wishes
- patrons' patterns of use and donation
- turnover in staff.

Many people expected to encounter resistance from their boards and upper level administrators, if they tried to deaccession collections. This discussion could potentially serve as a teaching situation for boards. An argument can be made for the quality of collections rather than the quantity.

In a discussion of "What does cooperation mean?" people listed the following: communication, willingness to work with others, stronger professional community,

taking risks, respect, trust, sharing knowledge, and compromise. The costs of non-cooperation are the fragmentation of collections, disunity, missed opportunities, a poor professional image, bad public relations, poor access to collections, gaps in the historical record, breaking the law, and increased backlogs.

Wrap-up--an overview of tools for Arizona archives:

- Rob Spindler talked about maximizing the *Cultural Inventory Project*. He asked everyone to send new copies of mission statements/collection development policies/descriptions for the website.
- Another goal is maximizing *Arizona Archives Online*. This is a place to find more detailed information about who has what. It employs the EAD standard and enables users to search archives/finding aids from a number of Arizona repositories at the same time. There is a continuing effort to get the guides up and to generate funds to do so.
- Spindler also discussed *Why Arizona* which is a digitization project of the three university special collections. They are planning to digitize archival materials related to why people came to Arizona, why they stayed, and why they left, with the goal of finishing in time for the Arizona Centennial. They are requesting public input on what should be digitized and seeking support for the work.
- *Arizona Memory Project* allows just about anybody in the state to digitize their content and put it online, accessible through Google.

To conclude the conference, Mark Greene asked the audience to review the key points. Collection development policies need to be refined and clearly stated and must be more explicit than an agency's mission statement. It's helpful to learn that it's acceptable to not use a high level of detail in processing all collections. Minimal processing is a useful and liberating tool that is highly appropriate for certain situations and collections. People also enjoyed learning that they were not alone and that everyone goes through similar situations and frustrations at their archives.

The conference provided a good opportunity to promote cooperation between Arizona agencies, but more than two days of discussion are needed. People should go home and make commitments to cooperate today and start to change things. Even though the goals

discussed will likely take years to implement, it's important to start with a single step. It's vital to involve Arizona's diverse communities in order to move forward. Those who were not here should be included in this discussion and be invited to participate in future meetings.

Conference calls may provide a means to continue this conversation or a website with Skype-like capabilities to see one another as well. It helps to be face to face on occasion, however. Hopefully the discussion can be continued at other regional archives meetings. Melanie Sturgeon suggested another similar meeting in a year from now, an idea with which the others seemed to agree. People agreed that the learning and conversations of the last two days were significant.

In their closing comments, the consultants stated that they were impressed with the cooperation of the different Arizona archives and with their organizations. Thompson suggested that the group might consider a project involving EAD development for smaller institutions and a best practices approach to collections management from beginning to end. He encouraged more attention to the survey of areas that need to be collected and the idea of the group taking on a goal, such as working to fill collections gaps with the Centennial as a target date. Arizona archives could develop a cooperative project that would put them on the cutting edge nationally. Tim Ericson also stressed that it's important for the group to decide how to cooperate and proceed. Sharing information about collections and collections policy is an important first step. Also, this is the time to grow the group by including those who were not able to attend.