



Work It, Baby!

The Power of Collections Assessment



Martha O'Hara Conway

Collections Assessment

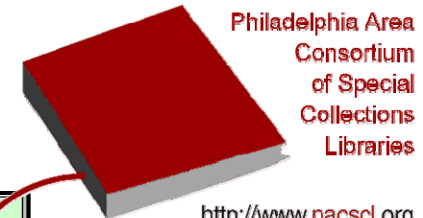
- ▶ What is it?
- ▶ Why do you do it?
- ▶ How do you do it?
- ▶ What do you get?

What is Collections Assessment?

- ▶ Systematic and purposeful information gathering
 - ▶ Systematic
 - ▶ Having, showing, or involving a system, method, or plan
 - ▶ Purposeful
 - ▶ Goal: the result or achievement toward which effort is directed
 - ▶ Outcome: a final product or end result
 - ▶ Information
 - ▶ Quantitative: describing or measuring quantity (how many of what)
 - ▶ Qualitative: describing or measuring quality (how good)
 - ▶ Other: about the project itself

Why Do Collections Assessment?

- ▶ Because you want to ...
 - ▶ Create and share collection-level information
 - ▶ PACSCL, BMRC



About the Project	Participating Institutions	Monthly Updates	Documentation and Links	Find Collections	Surveyors' Blog
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Search for Collections in the PACSCL Survey Database

Please enter search criteria in one or more fields below. Leaving all of the fields blank will bring up all of the records in the database.

Please note that, in most cases, the collections in this database represent only a portion of a participating institution's holdings. Please contact individual institutions for information on other holdings.

Institution	All institutions ▾
Creator	<input type="text"/>
Collection Title	<input type="text"/>
Words in Abstract	<input type="text"/>
Names, Subjects, Places, Genres and Occupations	<input type="text"/>
Themes (topics of particular interest suggested by participants at the onset of the project)	Alternative viewpoints ▾
Keyword	<input type="text"/>

As of February 22, 2009, this database includes information on 1,745 collections held by 16 participating PACSCL institutions. The collections were surveyed during the current project (2006-present) and an earlier survey project at The Historical Society of Pennsylvania (2000-2002).



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BLACK METROPOLIS RESEARCH CONSORTIUM SURVEY

Home About Search Browse Institutions Browse Collections FAQ

Welcome

Welcome to the Black Metropolis Research Consortium Survey site. This website and its contents represent the culmination of two years of archival surveying of African American primary-source research materials in locations throughout the Chicago region.

To find out more about these collections, try a search, or browse an alphabetical list of collection titles. You can also search through a list of participating institutions (or view them on our survey sites.map).

To find out more about the survey project, visit our project information page, which includes documentation of the survey methodology, presentations offered by BMRC staff, and workshops sponsored by the BMRC over the course of the grant period.

Photo: Chicago Urban League Photos, Children at Chicago Urban League Headquarters (Staircase), CULR.04.0190.2160.003, University of Illinois at Chicago Library, CARLI Digital Collections.

Keyword search

Anywhere

Search More options

Guided search

Click a term to initiate a search.

Names

- Washington, Harold, 1922-1987 (30)
- Northwestern University (Evanston, Ill.) (17)
- Chicago (Ill.), Board of Education (16)
- Chicago (Ill.), Office of the Mayor (15)
- University of Illinois at Chicago (15)
- Chicago Public Schools (14)
- Chicago State University (14)
- Illinois Institute of Technology (14)
- Chicago defender (13)
- Chicago Housing Authority (13)
- more...

Subjects

- Music by African American composers (43)
- African Americans--Civil rights (38)
- African American composers (33)
- Community organization--Illinois--Chicago (33)
- African Americans--Illinois--Chicago (32)

BMRC

The Black Metropolis
Research Consortium

MLibrary

Why Do Collections Assessment?

- ▶ Because you want to ...
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 - ▶ PACSCL, BMRC
 - ▶ Establish processing priorities
 - ▶ Bancroft



A screenshot of the website for The Bancroft Library Manuscripts Survey Project. The page has a yellow background and features the title "The Bancroft Library Manuscripts Survey Project" at the top. Below the title is a navigation menu with links for "ABOUT THE PROJECT", "DOCUMENTATION & LINKS", "SURVEYOR'S BLOG", and "BANCROFT HOME". The main content area is titled "Documentation and Links" and is organized into three sections: "Documentation" with links to "Grant Proposal", "First Report", "Second Report", and "Final Report"; "Funders" with links to "The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation" and "The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation"; and "Related Projects" with links to "Association of Research Libraries: Exposing Hidden Collections", "Columbia University", "Historical Society of Pennsylvania", and "PACSCL Consortium Survey Initiative".

Why Do Collections Assessment?

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 - ▶ Establish processing priorities
 - ▶ Bancroft
 - ▶ Understand unmet preservation needs
 - ▶ Columbia, NYU, Smithsonian
 - ▶ Manage physical collections

CU Home > Libraries Home
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
PRESERVATION AND DIGITAL CONVERSION DIVISION
CLIO Databases E-Jo
Search the Catalog: Keyword(s)
Libraries & Collections Catalogs E-Resources Request It Ask U

Special Collections Materials Survey Instrument

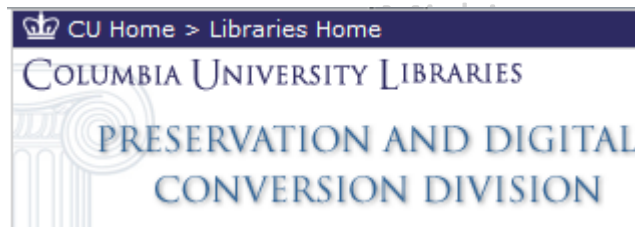
In 2003, Columbia University Libraries (CUL) received funds from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to carry out a one-year survey of unprocessed and under-processed archival collections. Using the model developed by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP), which includes extensive explanations of the access, condition, and value ratings, an effective workflow was planned in accordance with the design of the survey instrument, a Microsoft Access database.

We make the survey instrument available as a package of the following four files, which should be downloaded together:

- [BlankSurveyDatabase.mdb](#)
- [ReadMe.txt](#)
- [UsingTheDatabase.doc](#)
- [RatingsDescription.doc](#)

New York University has recently created an adaptation of this survey, and is also making it freely available. Please see <http://library.nyu.edu/preservation/archivespreservation.html> for the NYU version, and also for a separate survey tool specifically for electronic media.

Columbia between October 2003 and July 2004, 366 unprocessed collections surveyed within the Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Avery Architectural and Art Library and C.V. Starr East Asian Library. In total, 1,588 survey hours spent entering data on 569 collections and accounting for 26,299 units including 15,867 linear feet. These collections are composed of 8,703 feet of paper; 87,948 bound volumes of all types; 100,903 architectural drawings; 18 graphic works; 158,478 photographic materials; 136,457 negatives, slides, in pictures and microfilm; 1,288 phonographs; 6,559 audiotapes, videotapes computer media; 277 optical media items, and nearly 3,400 pieces of realia memorabilia. All media, housing and intellectual access were given quality ratings and the research value of each collection was assessed and rated. We can compare collections across the three repositories on any of these bases grouping or sorting them by subject, language, creator type, and other criteria.



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 - ▶ Columbia, NYU, Smithsonian

Condition Survey Manual

Barbara Goldsmith Preservation & Conservation Department
Division of Libraries
New York University

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
LIBRARIES

MLibrary

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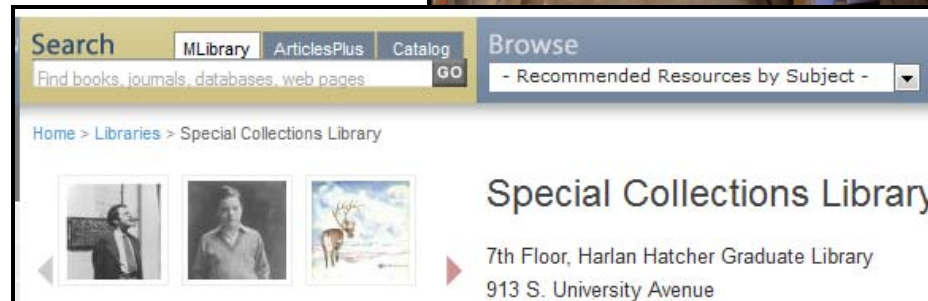
- ▶ Create and share collection-level information



The screenshot displays the Smithsonian Institution Archives website. The top navigation bar includes 'COLLECTIONS ▶', 'SERVICES ▼', and 'SMITHSONIAN HISTORY ▶'. A sidebar on the left lists various services: 'SERVICES', 'Reference ▶', 'Rights and Reproduction', 'Records Management ▶', 'Collections Care ▼', 'Preservation', 'Conservation', 'Digitization', 'Forums ▶', and 'Publications & Resources ▶'. The main content area is titled 'Collections Care' and features a sub-section 'COLLECTION STEWARDSHIP'. A photograph shows a woman, Beth Antoine, working at a desk with a lamp. Below the photo is a caption: 'Postgraduate Fellow in Conservation, Beth Antoine, Center for Archives Conservation, Smithsonian Institution Archives, by Nora Lockshin.' To the right of the photo is a text block: 'The Smithsonian Institution Archives has a fundamental responsibility for collections stewardship. Measures are taken every day to ensure that documents and records, both analog and digital, are preserved for future generations, and made accessible through current technologies. The Archives cares for several media, from paper documents and photographs, to flexible film and magnetic media to floppy disks and hard drives. Through stabilization measures such as providing appropriate housing materials, timely preservation treatments, and excellent storage climates, these materials are available to the public for reference.'

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 - ▶ Understand unmet preservation
 - ▶ Columbia, NYU, Smithsonian
 - ▶ Manage physical collections
 - ▶ Michigan



MLibrary

First Things First: Get Organized

- ▶ Define the scope
 - ▶ Unprocessed collections
 - ▶ Collections meeting certain criteria
 - ▶ All collections
- ▶ Identify the resources
 - ▶ Who will do the work?
 - ▶ What do they need to know?
- ▶ Assemble the documentation and test the tools
 - ▶ Procedures manual (definitions, examples, checklists)
 - ▶ Paper worksheets => relational database

Next Things Next: Get to Work

▶ Methodology

- ▶ open the boxes
- ▶ look at the stuff

▶ Activity

- ▶ count and assess the condition of the containers
- ▶ identify and assess the condition of the material
- ▶ evaluate arrangement (ease of use)
- ▶ evaluate description (existence and accessibility)
- ▶ assess research value

Collecting Quantitative Information

- ▶ Requires little or no judgment to determine
 - ▶ How many? (extent)
 - ▶ Of what? (types of materials, special formats)

- ▶ Questions
 - ▶ Will every box be opened, or is sampling OK?
 - ▶ How will extent be measured?
 - ▶ Which types of content will be identified?
 - ▶ How will it be categorized?

Not-So-Secret Weapon

- ▶ Checklists
 - ▶ Types of containers
 - ▶ Types of materials
 - ▶ Collection surrogates
 - ▶ Conservation issues
 - ▶ Special formats
 - ▶ Topics/Themes

Collecting Qualitative Information

- ▶ Requires making some kind of judgment in order to
 - ▶ assign a rating (value)
 - ▶ along a numeric or descriptive continuum (scale)
- ▶ In a numeric continuum
 - ▶ 1 is the lowest or worst
 - ▶ 5 is the highest or best
- ▶ In a descriptive continuum
 - ▶ “poor” or “terrible” to “very good” or “excellent”
 - ▶ “negligible” or “none” to “significant” or “very high”

Not-so-Secret Weapon

- ▶ Ratings Descriptions
 - ▶ Condition
 - ▶ physical condition of collection material
 - ▶ quality of the housing in which it is contained
 - ▶ Physical Access (Arrangement)
 - ▶ Intellectual Access (Description)
 - ▶ Research Value
 - ▶ Other Value

The Power of Collections Assessment

- ▶ Get your act together
 - ▶ It feels good
 - ▶ It makes you look good
- ▶ With your act together you can
 - ▶ Pursue and protect strategic priorities
 - ▶ Create opportunities for collaboration
 - ▶ Make compelling appeals for new resources



Thank you!



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