

Archival Processing: Definitions and Related Terminology

Collection:

1. a set of archival or (more commonly) manuscript materials.
2. materials assembled by a person, organization, or repository from a variety of sources.
3. an artificial collection (sometimes pl., collections) a thematic aggregation of sets of otherwise unrelated archival materials (also pl., collections).
4. the holdings of a repository, taken as a whole.

Processing: preparing archival materials for use.

More Product, Less Process: minimal processing to arrange and describe archival series and collections to reduce or avoid backlogs.

* Relying on adequate environmental conditions to prevent damage caused by rust and acid migration, minimal processing generally retains staples and other fasteners in collections and keeps original folders. It also relies on minimal descriptions and keeps the original physical arrangement of the collections, including keeping newspaper clippings and photographs in situ.

* Intended as a strategy to address problems of “hidden collections” and large processing backlogs in archives.

*Further reading: “More Product, Less Process: Revamping Traditional Archival Processing,” *American Archivist*, Fall / Winter 2005. Access at: <https://shorturl.at/RpZUU>.

Iterative Processing: the practice of preparing archival resources for use with limited initial labor and the intention of further work based on appraisal or user demand.

Arrangement:

1. the process of organizing materials with respect to their provenance and original order, to protect their context and to achieve physical or intellectual control over the materials.
2. the organization and sequence of items within a collection.

Level of arrangement:

1. the position of an aggregation of archival records within a hierarchy of arrangement.
2. the degree of completeness to which archival records have been prepared for use.

Description:

1. a set of data crafted to identify and represent an archival resource or component thereof.
2. the process of creating a set of data representing an archival resource or component thereof.

Level of description:

1. the level of arrangement of the unit being described.
2. the completeness or exhaustiveness of the description.



Original Order: the organization and sequence of records established by the creator of the records.

Enduring Value: the usefulness or significance of records based on the information they contain that justifies their permanent or ongoing preservation.

*The decision to preserve in archives is primarily related to informational content with potential for display usually a secondary consideration depending on their organization's mission and goals.

*Often used instead of "permanent value" to indicate that some records may be record may be valuable for a long time, but not necessarily forever.

Definitions from the *Dictionary of Archives Terminology* (<https://dictionary.archivists.org>)
in April 2025 unless otherwise noted.