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Library Staff Presentations and Research

Title

Check Yourself: Auditing Your Workflows With the Accessioning Best Practices

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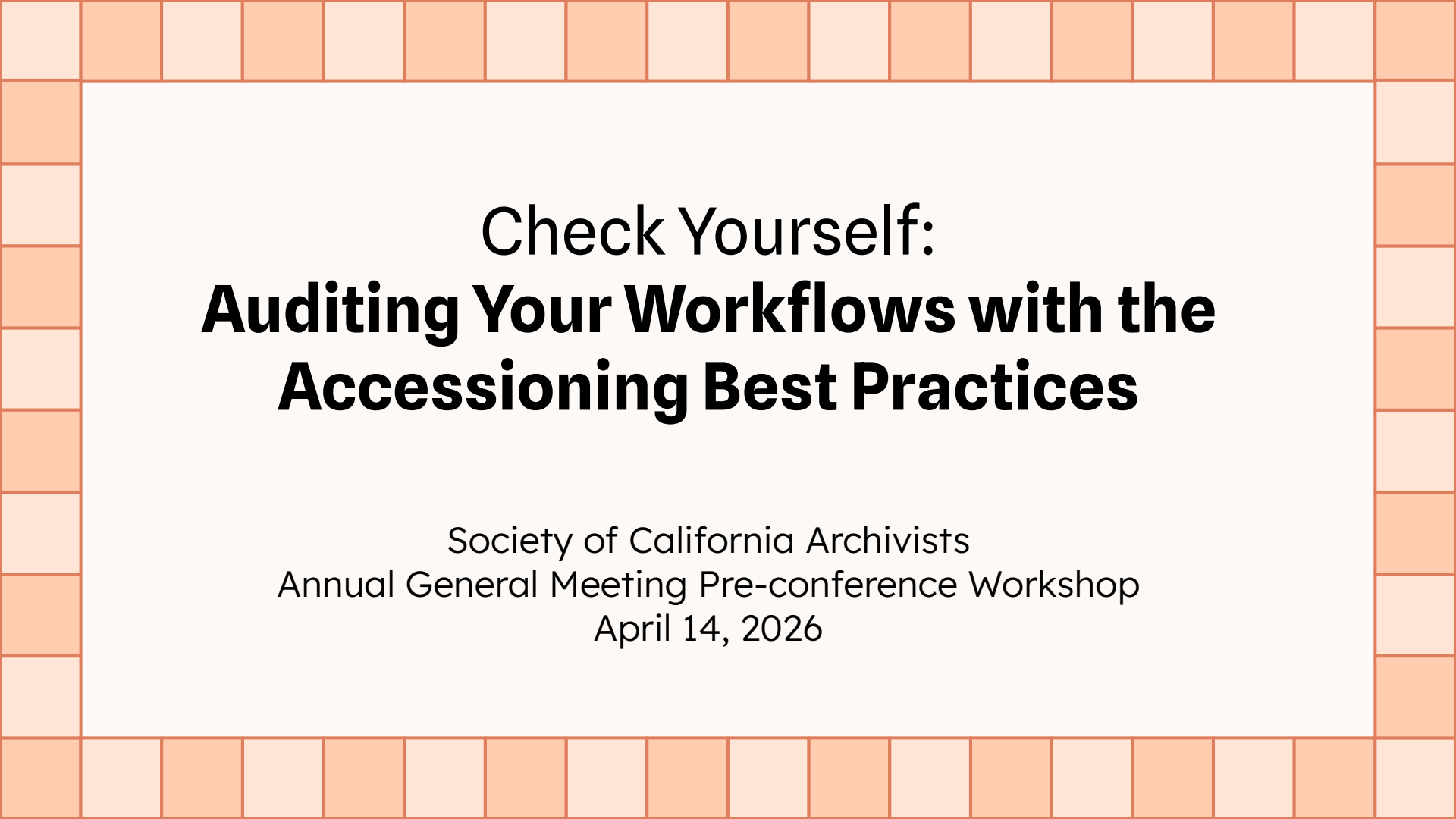
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Supplemental Material

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/27r4t1gh#supplemental>



Check Yourself: Auditing Your Workflows with the Accessioning Best Practices

Society of California Archivists
Annual General Meeting Pre-conference Workshop
April 14, 2026

Who we are

Kate Dundon



Supervisory Archivist
Special Collections & Archives
UC Santa Cruz

Alexa Goff



Accessioning Archivist
Special Collections and University Archives
University of Oregon

Jaime Henderson



Accessioning Archivist
Bancroft Library
UC Berkeley

Assignments

Prior to the workshop:

- ✓ Sign up for a breakout group
- ✓ Read the sections that correspond to your breakout group
- ✓ Read [Using Sphere of Control to Build Resilience](#) (optional)
- ✓ Make a copy of and review the Accessioning Audit template (optional)

Now: ✓ Introduce yourself in the chat

Agenda

Presentation ~ 15 min

Break ~ 5 min

Case studies ~ 15 min

Solo audit activity ~15 min

Breakout groups ~ 20 min

Break ~ 5 min

Large group share-back ~ 15 min

Q&A ~ 10 min

**Why does
accessioning matter?**

**Why are
accessioning best
practices necessary?**

Accessioning is foundational to ethical archival practice. It marks the beginning of care for archival materials and is proof of a repository's ability to responsibly steward this material.

A profession-wide set of best practices provides a framework for developing and sustaining an effective accessioning program.

Accessioning Best Practices GitBook

<https://accessioning.gitbook.io/archival-accessioning-best-practices>

What is accessioning?

Accessioning is a suite of activities through which archivists appraise, transfer, stabilize, and document archival acquisitions. Accessioning provides pathways to access, informs future decisions, and promotes sustained resource commitment for the care of archival materials.

Who are the Best Practices for?

Archivists

- Support for archivists' advocacy for accessioning
- Demonstrate value of accessioning work
- Uplift the invisible - but critical - labor of archival accessioning

Managers & Supervisors

- Creation of job descriptions
- Supervising accessioning work
- Advocating for accessioning work and those who are performing the work

Keep in mind...

The Best Practices **are** functionally organized

- Structured by archival actions, not job titles or roles
- Intended to be flexible, because institutional contexts vary
 - Staffing
 - Resources
 - Acquisition rates and models

Accessioning tasks **are not** prescriptive

- Tasks order does not suggest implicit value
- Accessioning work is collaborative, may require parallel work or iterative processes

How to implement the Best Practices

The best practices were written with intention to be

- Realistic and aspirational
- Flexible and scalable to any local context

Do the best
with what
you've got!



“Best Practices” terminology

Guiding Principles

- Informed by archival values: access and use, responsible stewardship, accountability
- Guide accessioning activities and provide framework for building an institutional accessioning program
- Represent an ethical baseline for archival accessioning

Methods and Practices

Documenting the Accessioning
Workflow and Creating the
Collection File

Stabilization

Pre-Custodial Considerations

Description and Access

Establishing Custody:
Packing, Transfer, and Intake

Successful Accessioning Labor
Practices

Born Digital recommendations

Integrate or isolate?

- Accessioning Best Practices for born-digital material were integrated into the recommendations.
 - Presented in their appropriate functional areas.
- Recommendations for specific born-digital needs are only made explicit when they diverge from the needs of analog materials
 - Appear in Born-Digital Best Practice

Accession record elements

An accession record should include specific elements documenting critical information about the accession.

- Required and optional data elements
- Elements
 - System agnostic
 - Cover analog and born-digital material
 - Informed by and complement DACS, ISAD(G), PREMIS, OAIS, TRAC
- Make information in accession records reusable and quickly discoverable



Appendix B. Best Practices At-a-Glance

Compilation of the best practices recommendations in an abbreviated format - sort of a pocket guide to the accessioning best practices

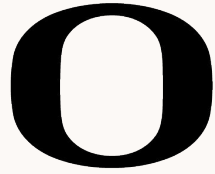
break



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Case Studies

Stories from Accessioning Archivists in the Field



UNIVERSITY OF
OREGON

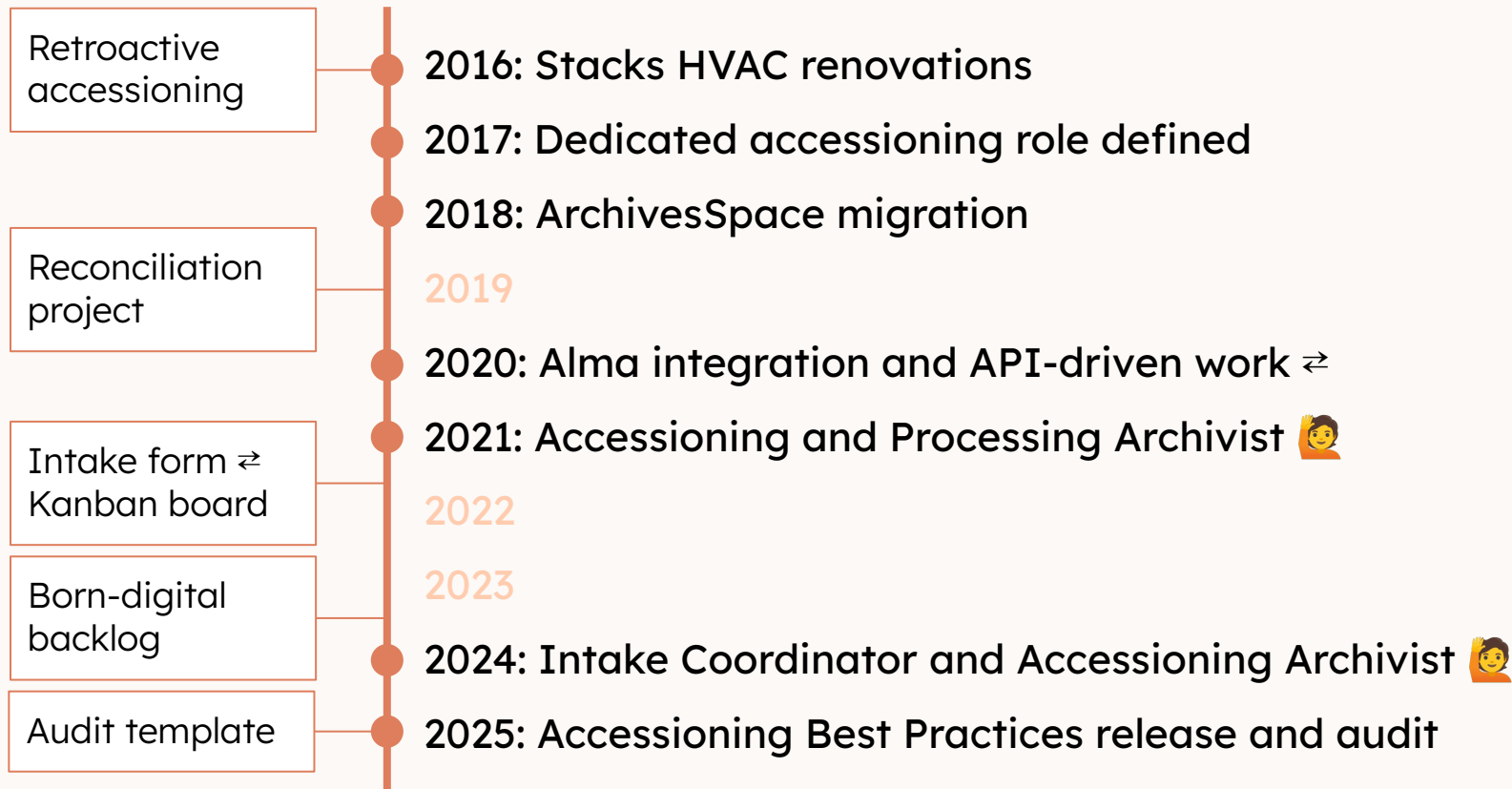
Libraries

**Special Collections
and University Archives**

Alexa Goff



Accessioning @ University of Oregon



Local Accessioning Practice Audit Template

Context

- New director, new classification
- Team upskilling
- Format-neutral approach

Outcomes

- Decent overall
- Born-digital work continues
 - Pre-custodial considerations
 - Stabilization & media obsolescence

Archival Accessioning Best Practices and Local Accessioning Practice Audit

This document reports notes and opinions resulting from an audit of local accessioning policies and procedures in comparison to the [Archival Accessioning Best Practices](#) (ABP) v. 1.0.2. Summary findings will be submitted to [a Person](#) for review and prioritization of policy or procedural changes; and/or resource allocations within the accessioning program.

Audit by: [a Person](#)
Audit date: [a Date](#)

Submitted to: [a Person](#)
Submitted date: [a Date](#)

Key:

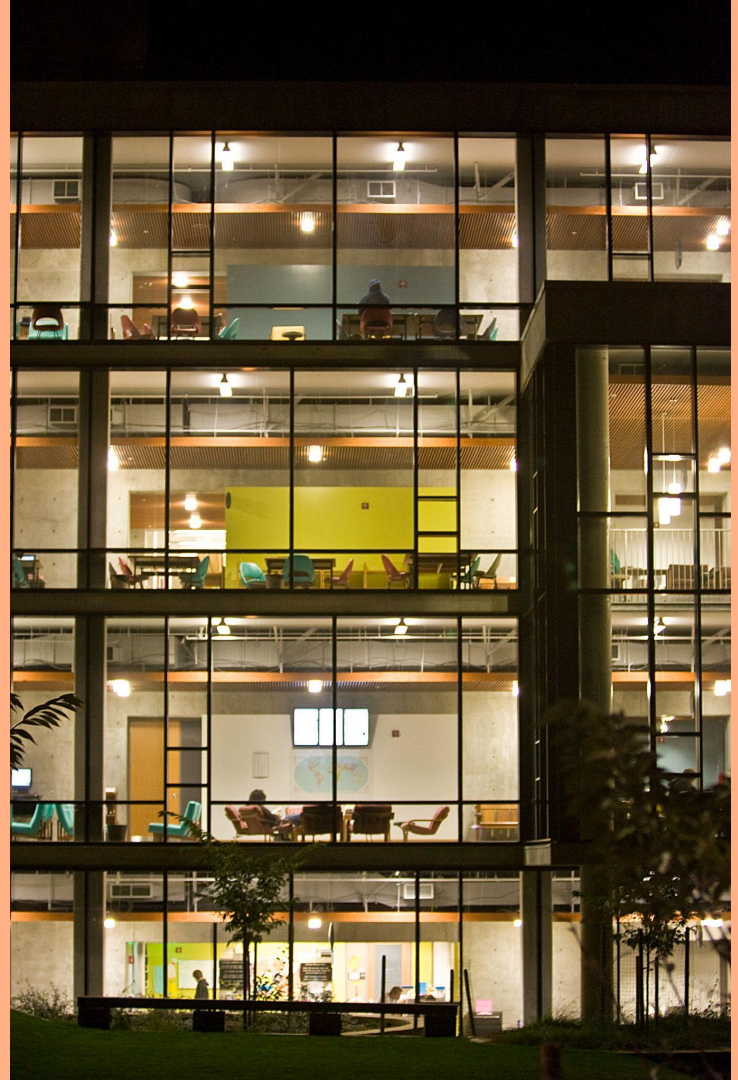
Rating icons	Definition of each rating. Insert your notes or description of current local practice(s) that fit this rating.	Insert notes on actions or resources needed to amend current to reach Best Practice(s)
✓	What we are doing well	Actions or notes, as needed
△	What could be improved: low priority	Recommended actions and notes
✗	What could be improved: high priority	Recommended actions and notes

Shared February 2025, unaffiliated with AABP
(just a fan!)

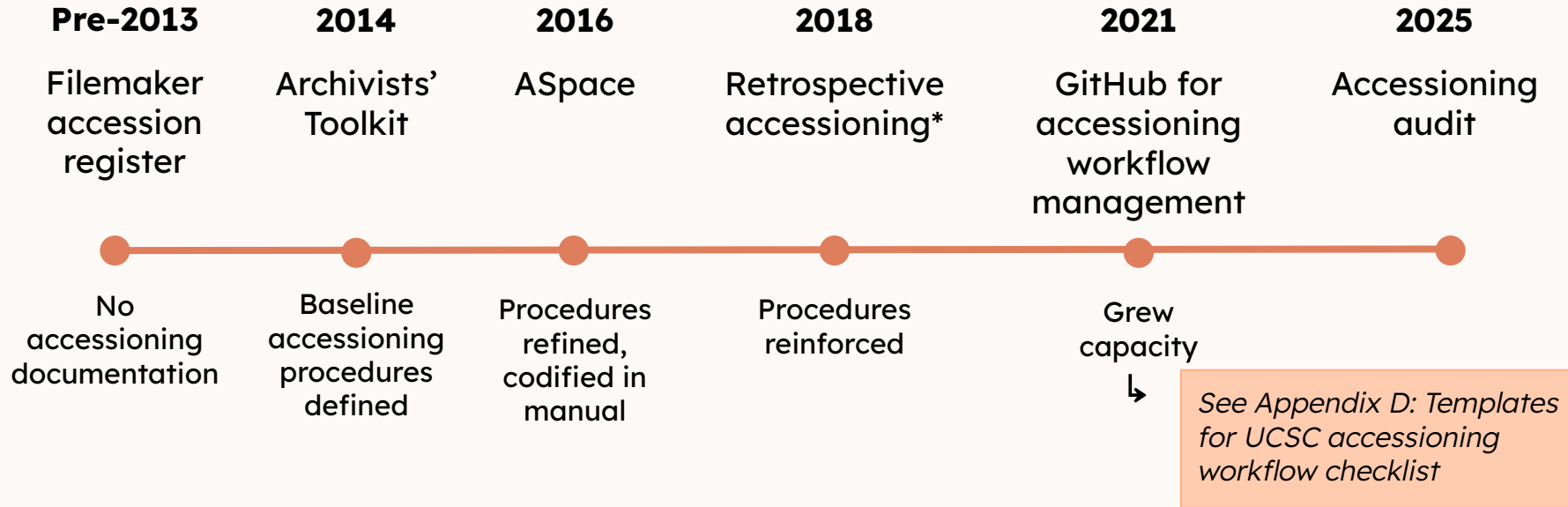
UC SANTA CRUZ

Special Collections & Archives
University Library

Kate Dundon



Accessioning at UCSC



* Dundon, Kate, Stephanie E. Bennett, and Jasmine Larkin. ["More Than a Project: Case Studies on the Practice of Retrospective Accessioning."](#) *The American Archivist* 88, no. 1 (2025): 78-105.

UCSC audit

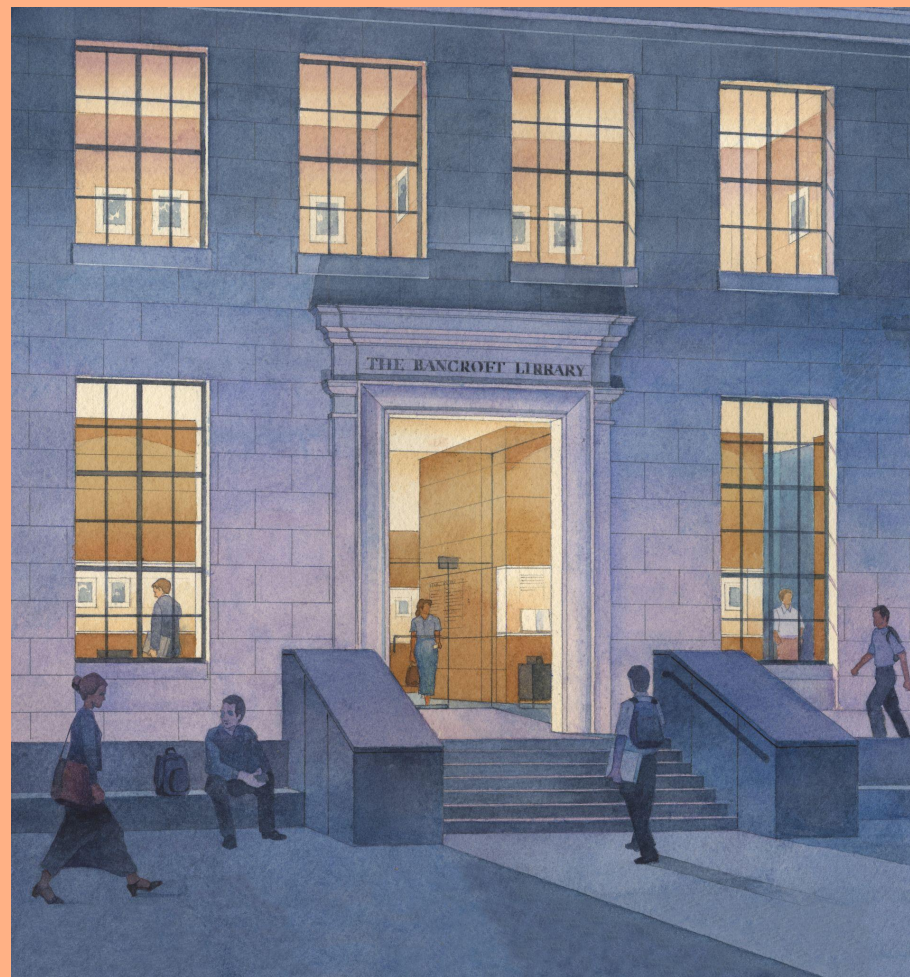
- Audit spreadsheet
- Summary narrative
- Read specific sections
- Structured meeting series
- Active participation
- Stakeholder buy-in

Best practice	Rating
<u>Section 1: Accessioning Workflow</u>	
1.1 Create and use a system to track accessioning work	We do this well
GOING FURTHER 1.2 Systematically track accessioning labor and capacity	Not necessary
<u>Section 2: The Collections File</u>	
2.1 Compile accessioning documentation and information in the collection file	We do this well
<u>Section 3: Selection and Appraisal</u>	
3.1 Involve accessioning staff early in the acquisition process	We do this well
3.2 Document collections before acquisition or packing	Could be improved
3.3 Solicit source-provided description of potential acquisitions	We do this well
3.4 Approach conversations about a source's care of materials and personal digital practices with sensitivity	We do this well

UC Berkeley

The Bancroft Library

Jaime Henderson



Acquisitions Archivist

*Successful
accessioning depends
on the work that
precedes it.*

✓ Pre-Custodial
Considerations

✓ Successful
Accessioning Labor
Practices

Acquisitions Tracking Project

- ✓ Documenting the Accessioning Workflow and Creating the Collection File
- ✓ Pre-Custodial Considerations
- ✓ Establishing Custody
- ✓ Stabilization
- ✓ Description and Access



Audit Your Workflows

Audit Template

- Capture notes on how local accessioning workflows and practices at your institution **compare** with the recommended Best Practices
- Rating/ranking system intended to help **prioritize** changes in your local workflows
- Can include notes on specific **recommendations** or **action** items to address changes, if desired
- Designed as a report to **advocate** for added resources or policies to meet ABP



Archival Accessioning Best Practices and Local Accessioning Practice Audit

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✓	What we are doing well	Actions or notes, as needed
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✗	What could be improved: high priority	Recommended actions and notes

How to Fill Out the Audit

 ABP Section

Section 5: Packing and Intake of Physical Collections

BEST PRACTICE 5.1 ➤ Pack collections in situ whenever possible

Notes:		
		
		
		

How to Fill Out the Audit

 Best Practice

Section 5: Packing and Intake of Physical Collections

BEST PRACTICE 5.1 ➤ Pack collections in situ whenever possible

Notes:		
		
		
		

How to Fill

Best Practice

BEST PRACTICE 5.1 ► Pack collections in situ whenever possible

Preparatory work done during the pre-custodial phase sets both parameters and expectations for what materials will be collected during the packing and intake phase. Packing the collection wherever it is stored before removing it to collection storage can assist with better physical and intellectual control of the materials.

Packing in situ ensures that:

- Archivists have an opportunity to identify and record the original condition and order of the materials, and
- Materials are placed into stable containers that can fit on collection storage shelves.

If unable to pack the collection in situ, provide the donor/seller with clear packing and shipping guidelines.



How to Fill Out the Audit

General notes/context

Section 5: Packing and Intake of Physical Collections

BEST PRACTICE 5.1 ➤ Pack collections in situ whenever possible

Notes:	Practice already in place for AA to be involved in all intake activities and packing. No policy.	
		
		
		

How to Fill Out the Audit

Section 5: Packing and Intake of Physical Collections

BEST PRACTICE 5.1 ➤ Pack collections in situ whenever possible

Notes:	Practice already in place for AA to be involved in all intake activities and packing. No policy.	
	• Packing in situ is always preferred option • For mail, AA sends detailed packing/shipping instructions (size, condition, cost, times)	Could codify as policy for staff-wide compliance (some cracks)
		
		

Maintain: doing well



How to Fill Out the Audit

Section 5: Packing and Intake of Physical Collections

BEST PRACTICE 5.1 ➤ Pack collections in situ whenever possible

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	• Mail instructions do not have guidance on original order	Revise mailing instructions
		

Improve: **low** priority



How to Fill Out the Audit

Section 5: Packing and Intake of Physical Collections

BEST PRACTICE 5.1 ➤ Pack collections in situ whenever possible

Notes:	Practice already in place for AA to be involved in all intake activities and packing. No policy.	
	• Packing in situ is always preferred option • For mail, AA sends detailed packing/shipping instructions (size, condition, cost, times)	Could codify as policy for staff-wide compliance (some cracks)
	• Mail instructions do not have guidance on original order	Revise mailing instructions
	• Occurrences of “no staff, no donor, no instructions” packing (bad results)	Policy (dept buy-in) to require minimum level of guidance and/or staff

Improve: **high** priority



Prep Your Documents



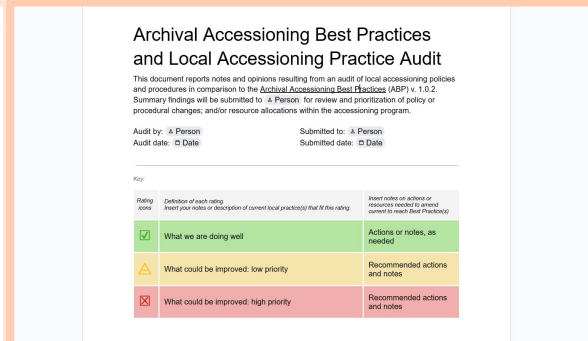
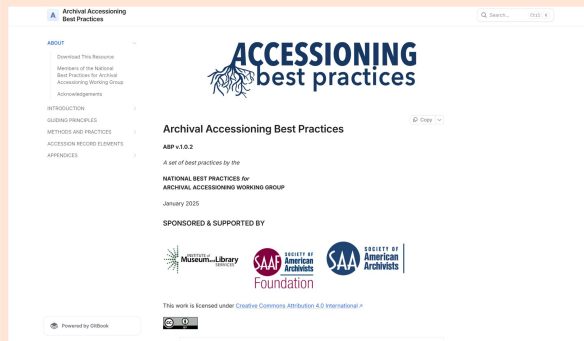
Accessioning Best Practices



Solo Audit Template



Workshop Handout



ON YOUR OWN

Solo Audit



15 minutes

**Fill out your own
individual audit doc**

**Audit *only* the sections
assigned to your group**

ABP Section Assignments

GROUP ONE

Sections 1, 2

Documenting the Accessioning
Workflow and Creating the
Collection File

GROUP TWO

Sections 3, 4

Pre-custodial Considerations

GROUP THREE

Sections 5, 6, 7, 8

Establishing Custody: Packing,
Transfer, and Intake of New
Collections

GROUP FOUR

Sections 9, 10

Stabilization

GROUP FIVE

Sections 11, 12

Description and Access

GROUP SIX

Sections 13, 14, 15

Successful Accessioning Labor
Practices

Ways of Being

- ★ listening as much as you speak, and remembering that colleagues may have expertise you are unaware of;
- ★ encouraging and yielding the floor to those whose viewpoints may be under-represented in a group;
- ★ using welcoming language, for instance by using an individual's stated pronouns and favoring gender-neutral collective nouns;
- ★ accepting critique graciously and offering it constructively
- ★ giving credit where it is due;
- ★ seeking concrete ways to make physical spaces and online resources more universally accessible;
- ★ and staying alert, as Active Bystanders, to the welfare of those around you.

SMALL GROUP

Share Back

 10 minutes

Share with your group:

- **One thing you are doing well**
- **One thing you would like to improve**

assign a person to take notes

ABP Section Assignments

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Sections 9, 10

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Sections 11, 12

Description and Access

GROUP SIX

Sections 13, 14, 15

Successful Accessioning Labor Practices

SMALL GROUP

Focused Discussion

 10 minutes

Collectively select:

→ **One high priority
issue at one org**

**Brainstorm ways this
issue could be addressed**

*assign a person to share
key points with large group*

ABP Section Assignments

GROUP ONE

Sections 1, 2

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GROUP FIVE

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GROUP SIX

Sections 13, 14, 15

Successful Accessioning Labor
Practices

break



Welcome back!

- What issue did you choose to focus your discussion on?
- What did you determine is within and outside of your control/influence?
- What steps (if any) might you take to make improvements?
- Any other key observations?



Q & A

ask anything!

Wrapping up...

- Share something you've learned today in the chat
- Accessioning Best Practices available on GitBook
 - <https://accessioning.gitbook.io/archival-accessioning-best-practices>
 - Maintained by SAA's Accessioning, Acquisitions, and Appraisal Section
- Continued engagement
 - Accessioning Collective on Slack
 - SAA's Accessioning, Acquisitions, and Appraisal Section



Thank you!