

Introduction

This survey aims to gather information about the reappraisal and deaccessioning practices of archival organizations in the United States and Canada.

For the purposes of this survey, “archival organizations” is an umbrella term meaning any organization that manages archives and manuscript collections. Even if your organization does not reappraise or deaccession, please fill out this survey. This data will provide the authors of this survey with collective and analytical information regarding archival reappraisal and deaccessioning. It may be used for and disseminated in presentations, posters, and/or publications.

Throughout this survey, “archival materials” includes records, manuscripts, and other unpublished primary source documents that are typically acquired by an archives or special collections repository. Reappraisal, as defined by the Society of American Archivists (SAA) glossary, is “the process of identifying materials that no longer merit preservation and that are candidates for deaccessioning.” Deaccessioning, as defined by the SAA glossary, is “the process by which an archives, museum, or library permanently removes accessioned materials from its holdings.” **In both instances we are interested in the reappraisal and deaccessioning of a substantive amount of a collection--a series or more of material--rather than the weeding that normally goes into processing a collection.**

This survey is **anonymous**, unless you choose to provide your contact information for follow-up questions. Please address any questions and comments to the authors of this survey, Marcella Huggard (mdwiget@gmail.com) and Laura Uglean Jackson (lugleanj@uci.edu).

Demographic information

What is your institutional type?

- Academic repository (College/university archives, special collections, or both)
- Corporate archives
- Federal government
- Local government (county, city, etc.)
- Local or regional historical society/museum
- Medical archives
- Museum archives or museum library and archives
- Non-university research library
- Other non-profit archives
- Public library
- Religious archives
- State historical society
- State or Provincial Archives and/or Library
- Tribal government agency or tribal archives
- Other:

Where is your institution located?

How long has your institution been acquiring archival collections?

- 0-25 years
- 26-75 years
- 76-150 years
- More than 150 years

How many full-time equivalent (FTE) staff, professional or not, employed in your repository work directly with archival collections or perform archival functions (i.e. appraisal, acquisitions, processing, reference, outreach, etc.)?

- 0-0.9
- 1
- 2-3
- 4-6
- 7-10
- 11+

What is the total annual operating budget (including salaries) for your institution's archives administration? (Please use numbers only.)

What is your total archival holdings? (Analog materials only; please treat cubic footage similarly to linear footage.)

- Less than 1000 linear feet
- 1,000-10,000 linear feet
- 10,000-50,000 linear feet
- More than 50,000 linear feet
- Don't know

To reappraise and deaccession or not

Does your institution have a written policy regarding reappraisal and deaccessioning?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Information about reappraisal and deaccessioning procedures is located in other documentation:

If yes, is this information available online?

- Yes
- No
- Intranet only (for staff)

Has your institution carried out reappraisal and/or deaccessioning of archival material?

- Yes
- No
- Have reappraised, have not deaccessioned
- Have deaccessioned, did not reappraise beforehand
- My current institution does not, but I have reappraised and deaccessioned at other institutions

If not, why? (Check all that apply.)

- Legal mandate prohibits deaccessioning
- Have not yet needed to do so
- Not enough time
- No policy or authority to initiate/guide the process
- Opposed to reappraisal and deaccessioning
- Opposed to selling collections
- Fear of bad publicity and/or damaging donor relationships
- Other ethical quandaries with reappraisal and deaccessioning:

- Other:

Even though your institution does not reappraise and deaccession, do you have collections you think should be reappraised and potentially deaccessioned?

- Yes
- No

Reappraisal and deaccessioning practices

Why are you reappraising and/or deaccessioning at your institution? (Please check your top 3 reasons.)

- To create collections storage space
- To implement or adjust to changes in collecting policy/collecting focus(es)
- Found out-of-scope materials
- Demonstrated lack of use by researchers
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Collection materials are so heavily restricted as to be nearly or totally inaccessible

Collection materials have preservation issues making use and management difficult

To make split collections whole

Monetary gain

To assess and prioritize processing backlog(s)

To comply with the law (e.g. replevin)

Requested by donor

Other:

Do you regularly reappraise archival materials, or do you reappraise on an ad hoc basis?

Regularly

Ad hoc

Both, as needed

Do you reappraise and/or deaccession born-digital archival materials?

Yes

No

Don't know

When did your institution start reappraising and deaccessioning archival materials?

5 years ago or less

6-10 years ago

11-30 years ago

More than 30 years ago

Don't know

Does your institution refer to the SAA guidelines on reappraisal and deaccessioning when performing these actions?

Yes

No

Did when developing local procedures

For certain tasks:

Who makes the decision to deaccession individual collections? (Check all that apply.)

An acquisitions or collections committee

Committee dedicated to reappraisal and deaccessioning

- Archivist, curator, or other professional staff person makes individual decisions
- Administrators and/or management
- Board of directors
- Other:

What does your institution do with deaccessioned materials? (Check all that apply.)

- Transfer to another archival institution for preservation and research or other archival uses
- Transfer to another unit or institution for a different purpose (i.e. to public library, circulating stacks, community or high school theatre, etc.)
- Sell
- Return to the donor
- Destroy
- Other:

If you sell materials, how does your institution use proceeds from the sales? (Check all that apply.)

- Buy new collection materials
- Use toward preservation needs for existing collections
- Use toward annual operating budget
- Use toward emergency (i.e. roof leak, budgetary shortfall, etc.)
- Other:

Does your institution follow any guidelines about selling collection materials? (Check all that apply.)

- AAM or other professional code of ethics or guidelines
- Institutional code of ethics and/or guidelines
- State and/or federal law
- None of the above
- Other:

When transferring archival materials to another archival institution, what documentation do you send to the other institution? (Check all that apply.)

- Copies of donor file/accession records
- Copy of finding aid
- Directions to OCLC catalog record, copy of MARC record if available
- Copy of container list if available
-

None of the above

Other:

Do you track if the other institution makes the collection available?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Do you notify the donor after you have transferred a collection?

- Yes
- No
- Notified donor prior to transfer
- Other:

Do you publicize in any way that your institution deaccessions?

- Yes
- No

If yes, how have you announced or publicized the fact that your institution has deaccessioned? (Check all that apply.)

- Website/social media (e.g. blogs, etc.)
- Finding aids/catalog records
- Newsletter
- Other:

Pros and cons

What benefits have you seen from reappraising and deaccessioning at your institution? (Check all that apply.)

- Improved overall access to collections
- Made split collections whole
- Prioritized backlog
- Complying with the law
- Complying with current policies
- More focused collecting scope
- Added income
-

More space for new collections

Other:

What negative effects have you seen from reappraising and deaccessioning at your institution? (Check all that apply.)

- Negative affect on donor relations
- Negative perception from public
- Negative perception from administration/board of directors
- Loss of valuable materials
- Turned collection materials into assets
- Taking archival materials out of the public trust
- Other:

Final thoughts

If you have anything you would like to add about reappraisal and deaccessioning, please feel free to comment here:

If you are willing to be contacted for a possible follow-up survey or interview, please provide your name and email address:
