Special Collections and Archives Arrangement and Description Policy

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Overview

The Arrangement and Description Policy details the manner in which Cline Library Special Collections and Archives (SCA) carries out the work of archival processing, arrangement, and description in order to manage, preserve, and provide access to its archival collections. The department recognizes that contemporary archival processing is researcher-driven, responding to the changing needs of communities, new or emergent research uses and interests, and technological advancements and shifts. The department seeks to use inclusive and respectful language in all its archival descriptions to reflect the diversity of the communities documented in its archival holdings and to support an equally diverse community of researchers.

SCA adheres to the guidelines laid out in the *Protocols for Native American Archival Materials* in all its activities, including the processing, arrangement, and description of materials which document Native American and Indigenous communities. Please contact the department to learn more.

Processing

Collection (archival) - a set of archival materials; more specific terms such as "records," "papers" or record formats (e.g. photographs, oral histories) may be used in collection titles based on the nature of the archival materials in question.

Processing - preparing archival materials for use; common tasks include surveying or inventorying, arranging, describing, performing basic preservation activities, and providing adequate storage conditions which enable long-term access and use.

Unprocessed - archival materials which have not yet been prepared for research use

SCA's primary goal in processing archival materials is providing access to researchers as quickly and efficiently as possible. To this end, SCA seeks to make the entirety of its archival holdings within the Colorado Plateau Archives, including unprocessed or minimally processed material, publicly discoverable at the collection level and open for research as soon as is feasible. Unprocessed or minimally processed material from the Northern Arizona University Archives is not available for research access and use due to legal and privacy concerns. Please contact the department to learn more.

Arrangement

> **Arrangement** - *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.*

> **Context** - *the organizational, functional, and operational circumstances surrounding materials' creation, receipt, storage, or use, and its relationship to other materials.*

> **Physical control** - *a tracking function which includes notation of the storage location of archival materials in descriptive tools; an archival collection is brought under physical control when any component (e.g. boxes, folders, items, digital files or folders) can be readily located and their circulation and use can be tracked.*

Arrangement facilitates the use of archival collections by establishing physical control over materials. Arrangement provides researchers with information which helps them locate and access relevant materials within an archival collection.

SCA considers an archival collection sufficiently arranged for research use when the current physical or digital order of materials in the collection:
- protects the original context of archival materials;
- addresses any format-based preservation and storage needs;
- facilitates the easy and timely retrieval of boxes, containers, items, and/or digital folders/files by SCA staff.

Description

> **Archival description** - *Informational tools used for the discovery and management of archival materials, such as finding aids, bibliographic records, and descriptive metadata; a set of data crafted to identify and represent an archival resource or*

component thereof.

Intellectual control - an archival collection is brought under intellectual control when a descriptive record clearly indicates its scope, content, and context and enables the management, access, and research use of that body of material.

The purpose of archival description is to gain and maintain intellectual control over a given body of archival materials. Archival description enables researchers to discover, access, and use materials pertinent to their research interests. Archival description takes many forms, including inventories, finding aids, and descriptive metadata.

SCA considers an archival collection sufficiently described for research use when it is has a collection-level descriptive record which:
- contains the mandatory descriptive elements outlined in *Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACS)*, as well as those considered critical for discovery by SCA;
- allows a researcher to discover the collection and identify it as relevant to their research;
- adheres to the guidance laid out in the *Protocols for Native American Archival Materials* when materials being described pertain to Native American communities;
- provides information about servable units (e.g. boxes, containers, items, etc.) sufficient for SCA staff to retrieve those units for use in research.

SCA strives to utilize inclusive and respectful language in all its archival descriptions. To learn more, please review SCA's Outdated, Offensive, and Harmful Language in Archival Description Policy.

Access and Use Restrictions

Access restriction - limitation(s) on public access to archival materials. Access restrictions may be defined by a period of time; by a class of individual allowed or denied access; to address cultural sensitivity concerns; to protect personal or third-party privacy; or to preserve fragile, obsolete or near-obsolete, or technologically dependent materials.

Use restriction - limitation(s) on the research use or subsequent publication or further dissemination archival materials. For example, an individual may be allowed access to materials but may not have permission or right to copy, quote, or publish those materials, or conditions may be imposed on such use.

SCA provides information about any current access or use restrictions for archival collections in its public-facing descriptive information. These typically take the form of Conditions Governing Access, Physical Access, and Conditions Governing Use notes in SCA's finding aids, as outlined in *Describing Archives: A Content Standard*. To learn more, consult the Access and Use Policy or contact the department.

Rearrangement and Redescription

> **Rearrangement** - *the amendment or enrichment of previous organizational structures created during arrangement in order to re-establish original order, include additional materials, or reflect the outcomes of reappraisal.*

> **Redescription** - *the amendment or enrichment of previous products of archival description in order to correct factual errors, provide additional context, or include additional materials.*

As research interests in and uses for archival materials change, it may be appropriate to rearrange or redescribe materials to better enable their discovery and research use. Certain information in descriptive tools must also be updated to correct previous errors and/or reflect new or additional information, such as the addition of new materials to an existing archival collection. Additionally, SCA recognizes that existing archival descriptions, including finding aids and descriptive metadata, may include outdated, offensive, and harmful language, as detailed in SCA's Outdated, Offensive, and Harmful Language in Archival Description Policy.

Researchers who identify factual or typographical errors in archival descriptions; who wish to report outdated, offensive, or harmful language in archival descriptions; or who can supply additional descriptive information for archival material, are encouraged to contact SCA staff to suggest corrections or enrichment of existing information.

Guided by the *Protocols for Native American Archival Materials*, SCA staff may consult with cultural and institutional partners to enrich existing arrangement and description to provide additional context, correct factual errors, and highlight or bring to light previously hidden information and materials of relevance to Native American and Indigenous communities.

To learn more, please contact the department.