

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
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Chicago, Illinois**

**Standards Committee: Technical Subcommittee on Guidelines
for Reappraisal and Deaccessioning (TS-GRD)
(Prepared by Caitlin Christian-Lamb and Carrie Hintz)**

BACKGROUND

The Standards Committee received revisions to the Society of American Archivists Guidelines for Reappraisal and Deaccessioning from the Technical Subcommittee on Guidelines for Reappraisal and Deaccessioning in October 2016. This revision was undertaken as part of the formal five-year review cycle for the standard.

The Technical Subcommittee on Guidelines for Reappraisal and Deaccessioning was established in 2012 with the development and ongoing maintenance of the *Guidelines for Reappraisal and Deaccessioning* (“GRD”), a standard adopted by SAA. According to SAA’s Governance Manual, TS-GRD is: “responsible for overseeing the timely and ongoing maintenance and development of *Guidelines for Reappraisal and Deaccessioning*. These guidelines provide resources, recommended procedures, and other information for archivists who may be involved in reviewing their institutional holdings.”

DISCUSSION

The Standards Committee reviewed and discussed the submission package and feels that TS-GRD’s revision included a robust review process, consulting internal and external groups, and that they responded to feedback in a satisfactory manner. On November 10, 2016, the Standards Committee voted to recommend that the SAA Council adopt the revisions to the standard as proposed by TS-GRD.

The TS-GRD term is on a five-year review cycle, with its first revision due in 2017. TS-GRD commenced the formal review process in fall 2015, and based on the comments received, recommended revising the standard. According to the review package submitted by TS-GRD, “The nature of the revisions are largely to clarify procedure or broaden language to ensure the standard is applicable to a wide range of types of archival institutions. There are no substantive changes to the overall advice and direction of the guidelines.”

Appendix A details the specific revisions to the Guidelines for Reappraisal and Deaccessioning, with strikethroughs for deletions and underlining for additions. Appendix B outlines TS-GRD's call for comments and the member comments received. Appendix C highlights TS-GRD's review plan for these revisions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

THAT the proposed revisions to *Guidelines for Reappraisal and Deaccessioning* (as indicated in Appendix A) be adopted; and

THAT the charge of the Technical Subcommittee on *Guidelines for Reappraisal and Deaccessioning* be extended for another 5-year review cycle, to be completed by August 2022.

Support Statement: The SAA-Approved Standard: *Guidelines for Reappraisal and Deaccessioning* provides valuable guidance to archivists across the profession in small, mid-size, and large archival institutions as they review their institutional holdings. The minor revisions to the *Guidelines* clarify and update definitions while maintaining the value of the *Guidelines* to the profession.

Relation to SAA Strategic Plan: The work of the TS-GRD assists in achieving Goal 2 "Enhancing Professional Growth and Goal 3 "Advancing the Field."

Fiscal Impact: None.

Guidelines for Reappraisal and Deaccessioning

~~Reappraisal and Deaccessioning Development and Review Team:~~

~~Peter Blodgett, Huntington Library
Jeremy Brett, Independent Archivist
Cathi Carmack, Tennessee State Library and Archives
Anne Foster, University of Alaska-Fairbanks
Laura Uglean Jackson, University of Wyoming (Chair)
Chela Scott Weber, Brooklyn Historical Society
Linda Whitaker, Arizona Historical Foundation, Arizona State University
Marcella Wiget, Kansas State Historical Society~~

Created by the Reappraisal and Deaccessioning Development and Review Team and
approved by the SAA Council

May 2012

Revised by the Technical Subcommittee on Guidelines for Reappraisal and Deaccessioning, and
approved by the SAA Council

2017

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	2
Notes on Use of the Guidelines.....	3
Definitions	4
Introduction.....	6
Guiding Principles.....	7
Step-by-Step Process for Reappraisal and Deaccessioning.....	9
I. Rationale.....	9
II. Preparation.....	9
III. The Reappraisal Process.....	10
IV. The Deaccessioning Process.....	14
V. Evaluation.....	18
Appendix A: Example Checklist and Forms.....	19
Appendix B: Donor Letter Information and Templates.....	24
Appendix C: Deed of Gift with Language Addressing the Possibility of Deaccession.....	26
Appendix D: Reappraisal and Deaccessioning Bibliography.....	27
Appendix E: Sample Policies.....	32

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Reappraisal and Deaccessioning Development and Review Team created the first iteration of these guidelines during 2009-2012. The team was made up of eight archivists representing a broad array of institution types and regions. (Names and institutions from 2009).

Peter Blodgett, Huntington Library

Jeremy Brett, Independent Archivist

Cathi Carmack, Tennessee State Library and Archives

Anne Foster, University of Alaska-Fairbanks

Laura Uglean Jackson, University of Wyoming (Chair)

Chela Scott Weber, Brooklyn Historical Society

Linda Whitaker, Arizona Historical Foundation, Arizona State University

Marcella Wiget, Kansas State Historical Society

The Technical Subcommittee for Guidelines on Reappraisal and Deaccessioning (TS-GRD) consisted of four members and annually rotating ex officio representatives from SAA committees and sections. The first appointed TS-GRD was active from 2012-2017.

Mark Shelstad

Margery Sly

Laura Uglean Jackson

Chela Weber

Acquisition & Appraisal Section Chair, Ex Officio

Standards Committee Co-Chairs (2), Ex Officio

Council Liaison, Ex Officio

NOTES ON USE OF THE GUIDELINES

1. These guidelines are intended to be used and adapted where necessary by all types of archival repositories that want to engage in the practices of reappraisal and/or deaccessioning. They are intended to provide a basic structural framework for decision-making and to support, not supplant, existing or evolving repository-specific criteria.
2. These guidelines address the management of archival collections and, when applicable, series within collections. This document is not meant to address weeding or separating items, folders, and other materials found during accessioning and processing stages. See the definitions section below for further information on the distinction between weeding and deaccessioning.
3. These guidelines are format neutral, intended to be applicable for all materials regardless of format. This includes electronic and audio-visual materials.
4. These guidelines do not intend to cover every possible situation or contingency of reappraisal and deaccessioning; rather, these guidelines attempt to address universal issues involved with the practices of reappraisal and deaccessioning. Archivists should rely on their best professional judgment when dealing with specific circumstances that are not covered by these guidelines.

DEFINITIONS

The key terms used in these standards are drawn from *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology* by Richard Pearce Moses (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005) and the Dictionary of Archival Terminology Word of the Week. Some of the definitions are abbreviated. For the full definitions and notes go to: <http://www2.archivists.org/glossary> <http://archivists.org/glossary>

- Accession: n. ~ 1. Materials physically and legally transferred to a repository as a unit at a single time; an acquisition.
v. ~ 2. To take legal and physical custody of a group of records or other materials and to formally document their receipt. 3. To document the transfer of records or materials in a register, database, or other log of the repository's holdings.
- Appraisal: n. ~ 1. The process of identifying materials offered to an archives that have sufficient value to be accessioned. 2. The process of determining the length of time records should be retained, based on legal requirements and on their current and potential usefulness. 3. The process of determining the market value of an item; monetary appraisal.
- Deaccessioning: n. ~ ~~The process by which an archives, museum, or library permanently removes accessioned materials (i.e., collections, series, record groups) from its holdings.~~ Note: This is not to be confused with weeding, which is the process of identifying and removing items from a larger body of materials. n. ~ the process by which an archives, museum, or library permanently removes accessioned materials from its holdings
v. ~ to remove archival resources from intellectual and physical custody
- Disposal: n. ~ The transfer of records, especially noncurrent records, to their final state, either destruction or transfer to an archives.
- Disposition: n. ~ 1. Materials' final destruction or transfer to an archives as determined by their appraisal.
- Provenance: n. ~ 1. The origin or source of something. 2. Information regarding the origins, custody, and ownership of an item or collection.
- Reappraisal: ~~(also retention review), n. ~ 1. Archives – The process of identifying materials that no longer merit preservation and that are candidates for deaccessioning.~~ n. ~ 1. Archives: The process of identifying materials that no longer merit inclusion in an archives and that are candidates for deaccessioning. 2. Records management: The process of reviewing materials to reassess their retention value.
- Records management: n. ~ The systematic and administrative control of records throughout their life cycle to ensure efficiency and economy in their creation, use, handling, control, maintenance, and disposition.
- Replevin: n. ~ An action to recover property that has been improperly or illegally taken. Note: Replevin is frequently used to describe efforts to recover public records that are in private hands.

- Retention schedule: (also disposal schedule, records schedule, records retention schedule, transfer schedule), n. ~ A document that identifies and describes an organization's records, usually at the series level, and provides instructions for the disposition of records throughout their life cycle.
- Selection: n. ~ 1. The process of identifying materials to be preserved because of their enduring value, especially those materials to be physically transferred to an archives. 2. The process of choosing materials for exhibition, publication, reformatting.
- Series: n. ~ 1. A group of similar records that are arranged according to a filing system and that are related as the result of being created, received, or used in the same activity; a file group; a record series.
- Weeding: n. ~ The process of identifying and removing unwanted materials from a larger body of materials.

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1980s, the archival profession has more readily come to acknowledge reappraisal and deaccessioning as parts of good collections management practices. This is evinced in numerous case studies, institutional policies, conference sessions, and articles about reappraisal and deaccessioning. Despite the increasing amount of research and information on these practices, they remain underutilized as a collection management tool. controversial and not fully accepted by the profession. Archival practitioners need a clear process outlining general steps, problems, and solutions to responsible and ethical reappraisal and deaccessioning.

The Society of American Archivists (SAA) recognized a need for minimal, voluntary professional standards for the widespread practices of reappraisal and deaccessioning, ~~and in~~ In 2009 SAA appointed a development and review team to outline a rationale for responsible decision-making in alignment with the SAA Code of Ethics. The task force was intentionally comprised of eight archivists from a variety of types and sizes of repositories. Council approved the guidelines in 2012. From 2015-2017 the guidelines underwent review by the Technical Subcommittee on Guidelines for Reappraisal and Deaccessioning (TS-GRD).

The purposes of these guidelines are to:

- formally establish reappraisal and deaccessioning as responsible options for repositories looking to better manage their collections;
- provide the basic conceptual and structural framework for archivists, repositories, administrators, boards and other governing bodies using or planning to use reappraisal and deaccessioning as collection management tools;
- outline clear step-by-step processes for reappraisal and deaccessioning that can be adapted to all types and sizes of archival repositories; and
- assure a process of transparency, accountability and preservation of trust so that the public, donors, researchers, administrators, boards, and other stakeholders may better understand archival practice.

This framework is grounded in:

- a comprehensive review of the literature and
- an understanding that reappraisal and deaccessioning are part of a continuum of archival practice and principles.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- **Archivists must use professional judgment when dealing with contingencies.** Reappraisal and deaccessioning will raise questions, challenges, and issues that are not addressed in these guidelines. Exceptions to the basic principles outlined in these guidelines will need to be handled on a case-by-case basis.
- **Reappraisal does not always lead to deaccessioning.** However, reappraisal is required as a first step towards any specific act of deaccessioning.
- **The process should be systematic.** Reappraisal and deaccessioning must be performed systematically to ensure consistency; proper documentation; and ethical, responsible practice.
- **The process should be transparent.** A significant part of responsible and ethical deaccessioning is making actions transparent and known to patrons, the parent body, and resource allocators. Never should reappraisal and deaccessioning be done secretly or “under the table,” though the process may at times call for discretion. There is no need to reappraise or deaccession secretly because these are responsible practices for better managing collections.
- **Reappraisal and deaccessioning are shared responsibilities.** The parent body or administrative authority of the repository, the archivist(s) reappraising and deaccessioning, and the repository that accepts transferred deaccessioned material all play roles and have varied levels of responsibility in the reappraisal and deaccessioning of materials. It is especially important that an institution that receives deaccessioned material ensures ethical procedures and sound archival practices have been followed in the transfer and will continue to be followed in providing access to the material.
- **Reappraisal and deaccessioning can be implemented across the full range of an institution’s holdings or applied only to individual collections as the institution’s circumstances warrant.** Reappraisal and deaccessioning should be viewed as parts of the continuum of archival practice, and can become a regular part of institutional collection management. A repository should be free to determine for itself when it implements these processes. See section II. 4 (Identify the scope of collections to be included in reappraisal) for additional information.
- **These guidelines are applicable to the reappraisal and deaccessioning of series or portions of a collection.** In general the procedures for reappraising and deaccessioning whole collections are the same for reappraising and deaccessioning parts of a collection. If issues arise that are not addressed in this document, archivists are encouraged to use sound professional judgment to determine the best solution.
- **Each step of the reappraisal and deaccessioning process needs to be thoroughly documented.** This documentation should be retained as a permanent administrative record. Documenting the process and decisions made is essential for responsible and ethical practice. Proper documentation is crucial for providing archives staff, agency and institutional staff who create and transfer records, colleagues, researchers, donors, and donors’ heirs with information on what happened to a collection and why. Thorough documentation is a tenet in the SAA Code of Ethics.
- **There are legal considerations.** Legal issues of ownership of collections must be resolved

before deaccessioning can occur. Promises made in donor agreements must be taken into account. See section III.2 (Determine Ownership) for additional information. For materials in institutional or governmental archives, disposition will often be regulated by official records schedules that may have statutory authority.

- **There are ethical considerations.** Ethical considerations regarding the disposition of collections must be considered and handled in a transparent manner. Reappraising and deaccessioning collections for the primary purposes of generating operating income; satisfying personal interests, aversions, or prejudices; and pleasing donors or resource allocators are not consistent actions with best practices or the SAA Code of Ethics.
- **There are donor relation considerations.** It is essential to be open, honest, and sympathetic with donors when discussing the proposed deaccessioning of their gift. Share your policies, mission statement, and these standards with them so that they can fully understand why their donation or records were not kept. For examples of donor letters, please see Appendix B.
- **There are resource allocation considerations.** Depending on the scale of the project, reappraisal and deaccessioning can cost significant amounts of money through such expenses as personnel time and shipping costs. As with most tasks, it's important to calculate the costs and benefits before implementing such a project to decide if reappraisal and deaccessioning are right for your repository.
- **Plan for the future.** Materials acquired today could be reappraised and deaccessioned at some point in the future. It is important to communicate this to the donor, whether through a deed of gift or other method of communication. A deed of gift can state that the repository has a right to take such action. It can also inform the donor of all potential disposition outcomes at the time of donation (see Appendix C). Additionally, retention schedules and collecting policies may change. Saving obsolete collecting policies, collection management policies, and retention schedules as permanent records will provide information for subsequent generations of staff members about how the institution's acquisitions policies have evolved.

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS FOR REAPPRAISAL AND DEACCESSIONING

I. Rationale

A repository may use reappraisal and possible subsequent deaccessioning to achieve any of the following objectives:

- To improve overall access to materials
- To make split collections whole
- To assess and prioritize backlogs
- To correct faulty appraisal at the time of acquisition
- To comply with the law (e.g. replevin)
- To comply with current institutional collecting policies and retention schedules
- To assess collecting strengths and refine collecting focus
- To implement a change in the repository's mission
- To better balance research potential of collections with the necessary allocation of resources (space, staff, time, and conservation resources) for their care and preservation

II. Preparation

Gathering the right information and documents before embarking on reappraisal and/or deaccessioning is critical.

Before you act:

1. **Know your current state abandoned property laws.** Collections without deeds of gift or accession records may present significant obstacles to deaccessioning. In many cases, state abandoned property law will dictate how collections without known provenance must be handled. The SAA Appraisal and Acquisitions Section maintains a list of states with abandoned property laws: <http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/acq-app/abandonedlist.asp>. <http://www2.archivists.org/groups/acquisitions-appraisal-section/abandoned-property-project>. Be aware that these laws may change.

Some states make deaccessioning relatively easy. Others do not, especially if there is no deed of gift. If the state law is onerous or if none exists, your repository may want to consider identifying a legislator to draft or redraft a law. Building a coalition of repositories and institutions supporting such legislation may prove very persuasive. See additional discussion under III.2 (Determine Ownership).

If an abandoned property law does not exist for a state, the repository can still deaccession material that does not have a deed of gift or known provenance. In this case, the institution should decide on a systematic procedure that limits risks.

2. **Review your repository's collecting policy or records management policy with regard to scope of collecting.** ~~If there is none, develop a written collecting policy that addresses subject/geographical areas or types of materials to be acquired, or records management policy that addresses what types of records are to be retained and, if applicable, for what period within your institution.~~ A collecting policy or records management policy should support the repository's mission and provide the archivist with the parameters of the collecting scope. It is impossible to make accurate and defensible deaccession decisions if

it is not clear what the repository seeks to acquire in the first place. For examples of collecting policies, please see Appendix E.

3. **Review your repository's collection management policy or records management policy with regard to reappraisal and deaccessioning procedures.** If none exists, develop a written collection or records management policy that addresses how collections are acquired, loaned, cared for, reappraised, and deaccessioned. It should specifically address reappraisal and deaccessioning, defining the authority and approval processes for deaccessioning decisions; identifying acceptable methods of disposal; delineating acceptable expenditures of any revenue from sale of collections; and identifying a process for dealing with collections with unknown provenance. It should be formally approved by repository administration and be made available to the public, preferably online. Consider establishing these guidelines as a part of the collecting policy. For examples of collection management policies, please see Appendix E.
4. **Identify the scope of collections to be included in reappraisal.** There are options for how or when to reappraise. Reappraisal can be done for a repository's complete holdings or limited to certain areas by subject, by time period, by format, by agency, institutional division or department, or by other guidelines as chosen by the repository's staff. One option is to carry out a repository-wide survey and identify all collections or records series in need of reappraisal. Another option is to reappraise individual collections as the situation demands (for example, if a donor offers additional material to a collection that no longer fits the collecting policy, or if an agency or department is planning to transfer records during a move). Most likely a repository will implement both methods - creating a list of collections or record groups to reappraise and perhaps deaccession, but also reappraising as opportunities arise.

If several collections or record groups have been identified, gather minimal data suitable for a macro view of the collections, including collection title and call number, donor, size, and subjects. Review with appropriate individuals (as defined in the collection management policy) and select collections or record groups requiring more concentrated evaluation.

5. **Seek and obtain approval.** Reappraisal and deaccessioning are shared responsibilities. Whether a local, state/provincial, federal, or private institution, securing administrative approval before you proceed is essential. Explaining the why of this endeavor is critical. Outline the goals, objectives, and anticipated outcomes. Communicate who will do what, how and when. Make sure that administration is kept aware of the reappraisal and deaccessioning process at all significant stages. Document each step.

III. The Reappraisal Process

Once the preliminary work (section II) is done, the reappraisal process can begin. Collections and records series under reappraisal often share certain characteristics including, but not limited to:

- Their contents and subject matter are unknown or unclear.
- They do not fit the current collecting policy.
- They have no catalog records.
- Their provenance is unknown.

- They have not been used or their use is extremely infrequent.
- They are not unique or archival.
- They are highly restricted, due to concerns such as privacy or security.
- They are transactional records that do not appear to provide long-term research value.
- They are not the record copies.
- They may be unprocessed and in offsite storage for long periods of time.
- They consist of formats not collected by the repository.
- They consist of formats that are permanently inaccessible due to obsolescence, are physically degraded to the point of uselessness, or have become a danger to staff and users.
- They have been bypassed by years, decades, or centuries of scholarly or other research trends.

The reappraisal process is systematic, nuanced, and time-consuming. Reappraisal can result in adding administrative information often missing in collection files. Reappraisal is due diligence for neglected collections and record series. For many of these materials, it means a new and useful life either through a better understanding of holdings or through transfer to a more appropriate institution. Please note that collection management databases (such as Archivists Toolkit) may contain a module to assist with reappraisal and deaccessioning.

Following is an outline of the key activities involved in reappraisal:

1. Collect additional data. More information will be needed on the collections and series selected for further evaluation and potential deaccessioning beyond the information gathered for determining the scope of reappraisal. In order to make good decisions when reappraising, you should have all information available regarding why the collection or series was accepted in the first place. It's practical to have a checklist form for your repository. See Appendix A for example. Where possible, information should include:

- Donor or agency/department information (name, contact information, last known address, and biographical or historical information, as well as relationship with or within organization)
- Correspondence with the donor, donor's heirs, and/or other relevant parties about the collection, including the date of last contact
- Agreements - both those legally binding, such as deeds of gift or records transfer forms, and those stated more informally through correspondence or noted in the collection database, inventory, etc.
- Acquisition dates (accession logs and records of all accessions)
- Content and types of materials in the collection or series
- Use statistics and correspondence from users about the research significance of the collection; record of use in publications or exhibits.
- Existing descriptions for the collection (paper finding aids, EADs, catalog records, etc.)
- Physical condition or assessment, record of any conservation treatments or conservators' reports.
- Results of NUCMC and World Cat searches to determine if the collection is a split collection
- Financial files to determine if the collection was bought and to determine if the donor provided monetary gifts to the institution
- Records retention schedules

- Collecting policies from the time the collection was acquired
- 2. Determine ownership.** Determining who owns the collection (the repository or the donor) is necessary for deaccessioning the collection. It is also an important step even if the repository chooses to keep the collection.
- A. Does the repository own the collection?** First assess if there is a signed deed of gift which grants ownership to the institution. If there is no stipulation in the deed of gift restricting deaccessioning, then the archivist may proceed to deaccession according to repository policies. If there are restrictions in the deed of gift, these can be negotiated and modified in a formal agreement with the donor or, if the donor is deceased, the donor's heirs.
- B. What if there is no deed of gift?** There are three reasonable options:
- a. Contact the donor or heirs, if known, for a deed of gift in case the collection will be retained or to secure an agreement that allows for deaccession. A friendly letter explaining the situation may result in a positive response from the donor/heirs. Consider sending the letter by registered mail to ensure it is only received by the addressee or returned to the repository if the address is no longer valid. A registered letter receipt can be used to show that the repository acted diligently to find the rightful owner of the material.
 - b. Acquire ownership through the state's abandoned property law. The laws vary widely. They may require advertising for a certain time period, which may incur significant expense. They may require formal submission of information and a review process that may take a significant amount of time. If your state has no abandoned property law, consult with legal counsel on the best way to acquire title. Decide within your institution what the process will be, and document these decisions so that the process is clear and consistently followed. See also section II.1 (Know your state abandoned property laws).
 - c. If the donor took a tax deduction on the collection, this in effect implies they gifted it to the repository. This may require some risk tolerance on behalf of the institution's general counsel, but can be an effective way to acquire ownership over a collection without a deed of gift.
- C. What if there is no information on provenance?** This is a common occurrence in repositories, especially with fragmented collections, individual documents, older collections, three-dimensional objects, and certain formats such as newspapers or magazines. The absence of provenance does not preclude reappraisal or deaccessioning.
- a. Suspend the process until the status of the materials can be clarified.
 - b. Some states' abandoned property laws also address undocumented property; consult your law to see if it does. If it does not, consult with legal counsel on the best way to acquire title. Decide within your institution what the process

will be and document these decisions so that the process is clear and consistently followed. The process usually involves making a good faith effort to research the background of the collection and publishing public notice of intent to acquire title in a local newspaper, and may require you to register the property with the state.

- c. Calculate the risk-benefits. It goes without saying that the benefits should outweigh the risks. Without clear and legal title, a repository planning to transfer or destroy a collection incurs some risk if challenged. Before deaccessioning materials without a deed of gift or known provenance, it is wise to consult with your institution's legal counsel. Document the legal opinion before you act.

3. Make a decision. Once the essential information has been gathered, the final decision to retain, deaccession, or defer can be made.

A. Who decides? Deaccessioning is a shared responsibility. The people or organizational structures involved in the decision process will vary by institution and should be clearly stated in the collection management policy or records management policy. In large repositories with complex administrative hierarchies, ~~the policy~~ these policies often establishes a procedure to facilitate deaccessioning without seeking approval from every responsible party. This often takes the form of a standing committee representing the principal stakeholders. Document the proceedings and keep on file.

B. How is the decision made? Because facts about the collections are now documented, you should be able to answer some key questions:

- Does the collection fit within the collecting policy or records management policy?
 - How often is it used?
 - Would this collection and/or potential users be better served elsewhere?
 - What condition is the collection in?
 - What are the preservation/maintenance costs?
 - What is the potential research value?
 - Is the collection comprised of formats not generally collected by the repository, such as newspaper clippings, magazines, or artifacts?
 - Does the collection contain reproductions or copies of materials that are located elsewhere?
 - Is the collection or series restricted under federal or state law? If so, can portions of it be opened to researchers?
 - Must the record series be kept for a certain period of time for legal or fiscal reasons? Does it retain any other value (e.g. historical, administrative, research, etc.)?
- a. Data analysis is an objective approach and ideally serves the decision-making process. When the objective data is not decisive, the more nuanced issues of patronage, financial concerns, the balance between risks and benefits, internal politics, and/or higher administrative or legal issues should be taken into consideration. Often, such factors tip the balance one way or another.

4. What happens next? The repository can retain, defer, or deaccession. Whatever the approach chosen, document and keep all information for future reference.

- A. If retention is chosen:** Especially for unprocessed collections, it is now incumbent on the repository to make the collection or records series accessible by creating a catalog record, preparing an inventory, or processing it. The information you have already collected will inform and expedite these tasks. If ownership is not clear, proceed as described previously in section III.2 (Determine Ownership). If the costs and resources for determining ownership of a collection you wish to keep are prohibitively expensive, consider processing anyway.
- B. If deferment is chosen:** For various reasons (i.e. more information is needed; the collection/part of the collection was recently acquired; there are delicate donor issues) the repository may want to wait and re-evaluate the collection within one to five years, depending on the situation. The decision should be recorded and filed in a way that someone will remember to reappraise again at the specified date.

Please note, deferment should not become an easy excuse for continuing to do nothing with a backlogged collection—if you're going to wait five or more years, especially, the collection should be at least cataloged, if not fully processed, in the meantime.

- C. If deaccessioning is chosen:** see section immediately below.

IV. The Deaccessioning Process

At this point, the reappraisal process ends and the deaccessioning process begins. If a repository chooses to deaccession, there are typically four options for disposition: transfer, return to donor, sale, and destruction. Some public institutions have policies regulating disposition of state property. Check with your institution to find out if there are any policies in place to dispose of state property.

Also, follow applicable IRS regulations for deaccessioning recent acquisitions. As of 2011, IRS form 8283 contains a statement at the bottom that requires the recipient (repository) to complete form 8282 if the item is sold, exchanged, or disposed within 3 years of acquisition. It only applies to items appraised above \$5,000 and only if you've signed form 8283.

- 1. Transfer** of the materials to an appropriate repository is usually the ideal option, especially for manuscript collections, artifacts, published material, and artwork. This keeps the collection open for public access, ensures long-term preservation, and promotes positive relationships between repositories.

Identifying the best recipient may require online searches for potential repositories (including searching NUCMC and World Cat for closely associated collections), postings to professional listservs, and assistance from the donor or creator in contacting/locating institutions. Repositories may consider deaccessioning certain materials to other institutional departments or to non-archival institutions, such as K-12 schools, museums, public libraries, and theatre companies.

When contact is established, the following protocols and professional courtesies should be

observed:

- A. Disclose all information about the collection up front.** Specify any restrictions/special provisions, the condition, size, and content. If the repository does not want the collection, follow due diligence and contact other potential recipients based on collecting scope or geographical area.
 - B. After an agreement is made to accept the collection,** send copies of the collection file (correspondence, deed of gift, inventory) with the collection material. If there is any issue regarding privacy of the original donor (i.e. the donor wished to remain anonymous), the RBMS Code of Ethics requires privacy be held in confidence. If the collection has an OCLC catalog record, the holdings record can be transferred to the new repository. Complete the receiving repository's deed-of-gift or other documentation. Shipping costs are usually negotiated.
 - C. Consider sending a courtesy letter to the donor or the heirs** explaining when and where the collection has been deaccessioned and transferred. Although not legally required, taking this action can promote donor relations and help to avoid problems later. See Appendix B for a sample letter.
 - D. Material should normally be donated, not sold,** but if the material was originally bought, and is indeed worth the amount paid, then it is acceptable to ask a repository for reimbursement.
- 2. Return** the materials to the donor or originating agency/department. When contacting, be ready to reference your repository's collecting and deaccessioning policies and these guidelines. The repository should pay for the transfer back to the donor unless the donor explicitly offers to pay the costs of shipping. A repository should send the collection back to the donor/heirs/originating department if:
 - The repository does not own the collection and the donor wants it returned.
 - The deed of gift or other record stipulates materials be sent back to the donor.
 - The repository has been unsuccessful in finding a new home and destruction of the collection is not an option.
 - The collection is unlikely to be accepted by another repository.
 - The donor/creator must retain the series or collection for legal or fiscal reasons.
 - The agency or department requested that the records be returned.
- A. Remember to treat the donor or donor's heirs with respect and courtesy.**

Be tactful in presenting the reasons for deaccessioning their materials. Make the donor or donors' heirs aware that full consideration and deliberation were made in determining this course of action. See Appendix B for a sample letter explaining why the person's papers were deaccessioned.
- 3. Sale** of materials can be a viable option under some circumstances. Many collections consist of nothing but published books, audio records, stamps, and other collectibles that do not contain archival or research value but may have monetary value to collectors.

Before selling deaccessioned materials:

- A. Have written policies guiding the sale and use of the proceeds.** This policy should describe the conditions under which a sale should be considered ~~and~~. The policy should also specifically address how the proceeds from a sale may ~~will~~ be spent, such as purchasing new acquisitions, or supporting the collections through funding activities such as processing, digitization, reference, preservation and conservation of remaining collections, or even reappraising and deaccessioning more collections. The repository's parent body (e.g. state government, institution) may have policies in place for selling state/institutional property. The Society of American Archivists Code of Ethics does not address how sales proceeds should be used. For more information on this please refer to codes of ethics for affiliated professions, many of which allow for sale proceeds to be used only for new acquisitions or direct care of collections.
- B. Assess the risks.** Even when deaccessioning is done ethically and transparently, there is a risk the public will not look favorably on selling items from the collections. Past sales from art museum collections, for example, have generated criticism and bad press for the selling institution. However, archival collections are usually not of the same high monetary value as art (rather, saleable materials found in collections are more akin to library materials) and such risks do not preclude selling a collection.
- C. Note:** Reappraisal and deaccessioning should not be used to raise funds for budget shortfalls or emergencies. Sale of collections can be the result of the process, but should not be the impetus or driving factor of taking on the reappraisal process. Make sure the institution is aware of the potential risks and prepared to discuss or engage any criticism that may arise.

- 4. Destruction** of the materials. In certain situations, destruction may be the only option, especially if mandated by law, record retention schedules, or for health reasons, such as certain contaminations/infestations. Other circumstances that might justify destruction include, but may not be limited to: extremely poor physical condition; restricted or private information; or a preponderance of published items, duplicative materials, or obsolete formats. Infrequently, however, perfectly "good" collections may be destroyed solely because neither donors nor other repositories are interested in preserving them.

Destruction is seldom as simple as tossing in a dumpster; it requires some discretion. Nonetheless, the repository should be open and honest with donors and the public that certain deaccessioned collections will be/have been destroyed. Specific methods for destroying materials are determined by the repository or may be mandated by law and noted in retention schedules.

- 5. Other administrative details:** Although such details will be unique to each repository, thoroughly documenting the process and decisions is crucial to upholding ethical and professional standards. The following are general tasks to ensure that the reappraisal and deaccessioning work has been documented and made available for future reference.

- Retain and file information gathered about the collection and creator.
- Retain and file donor communication (written, telephone, emails).
- Retain and file correspondence with other repositories.

- Retain and file staff correspondence.
- Retain and file meeting minutes.
- Retain and file forms, checklists, and other paperwork that led to and documents the process and decision.
- Retain original files from original accession.
- Send copies of donor correspondence, gift agreements, and inventories to new repositories.
- Update retention schedules.
- Delete OCLC and local catalog records (note: OCLC catalog records can only be deleted by OCLC. However, the repository can overwrite a catalog record to delete it.)
- Destroy inventories available to researchers (i.e. online finding aids and those available in reading room) but keep a master copy for administrative use.
- Update accession records, control files and finding aids.
- Maintain readily accessible information about the disposition of deaccessioned collections.
- Retain within the internal collection database detailed information about the deaccessioned collection or record series.
- If deaccessioning marked materials, review procedures outlined in ACRL/RBMS Guidelines Regarding Security and Theft in Special Collections here: http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/security_theft.
- If desired, announce the completion of a collecting or deaccessioning policy, or the start of a reappraisal project, on your institution's website, blog, or newsletter. For an example, please see Mark Greene's "From the Director" column in the American Heritage Center's newsletter: <http://ahc.uwyo.edu/documents/about/publications/hh/2004summer/2004summer.pdf> [http://www.uwyo.edu/ahc/files/newsletters/hh-summer-2004.pdf#Heritage Highlights newsletter](http://www.uwyo.edu/ahc/files/newsletters/hh-summer-2004.pdf#Heritage%20Highlights%20newsletter)
- Note: It is inadvisable to reuse the collection/accession number.

V. Evaluation

To justify the time, expense, and resources used for reappraisal and deaccessioning, outcomes related to the initial objectives require evaluation and documentation. You should be able to answer these basic questions and submit a report.

- 1. Did the project meet its goals?** If so, quantify the results. This may include, but will not be limited to, reporting data related to number of collections or series made accessible, increase in patrons, number of collections transferred, contacts made with repositories, time and resources spent vs. savings, decrease in backlog, and encounters with donors or repositories.

If the goals were not met, state conditions, limitations, and lessons learned, combined with analysis and recommendations for the future. The inability to achieve certain objectives is not the same as failure.

- 2. Were there unanticipated benefits, discoveries, or outcomes?** This is often the rule rather than the exception during the reappraisal and deaccessioning process.

3. **Were there unanticipated obstacles, issues, or concerns?** Detail circumstances and describe solutions determined.

Appendix A Checklists and Forms

1. Checklist

Reappraisal

Before beginning the actual reappraisal:

_____ Determine objectives for conducting the reappraisal

_____ Review your state's abandoned property law

_____ Review your institution's collecting, collection management, and/or records management policies

_____ Identify the scope of collections that will be included in the reappraisal

_____ Ensure that your institution's higher administration has given approval for the process

_____ Determine who will make the final reappraisal decision (you, a committee, the repository director?)

Once the process has begun:

_____ Collect data, as applicable to your repository (use example form for assistance)

_____ Determine who owns the collection(s) under review, and take appropriate steps to acquire ownership if necessary or clarify the collection(s)' provenance

_____ Make the final decision whether to retain or deaccession the collection(s), or defer the decision

Deaccessioning

If you have decided to deaccession the materials:

_____ Consider all options: transfer to another institution, return the collection(s) to the donor(s), sale of the collection(s), or destruction

_____ If deaccessioning institutional archives, consult relevant records schedules or other policies to ensure compliance with records laws or internal disposition rules

_____ Note the applicable IRS regulations for selling, exchanging, or disposing recent acquisitions

If you have decided to *transfer* the collection(s):

___ Identify appropriate institutions

___ Disclose all information about the collection to the potential recipient (i.e. condition, ownership, content, size)

___ Negotiate shipping expenses with recipient

___ Copy collection file(s), inventories/finding aids, agreements, OCLC records, and any other relevant documentation about the collection and send with the collection materials

___ Send a courtesy letter to the donor, heirs, or records-creating agency

If you have decided to *return* the materials to the donor:

___ Contact the donor in a courteous and respectful manner, provide the reasons and motivations for the decision

___ Be ready and willing to pay for the return of the collection

If you have decided to *sell* the materials:

___ Create explicit policies regarding sales of materials in your institution

___ Assess all potential public relations risks

If you have decided to *destroy* the materials:

___ If you are an institutional archives, consult relevant records schedules or internal disposition rules to make sure that destruction is an acceptable or mandated option

___ Destroy records containing private or confidential information by shredding or other method of confidential destruction

After completion:

___ Conduct wrap-up work of filing, filling out forms, removing access points, etc.

___ Ensure the process has been documented

2. Reappraisal Example Form

Who conducted the reappraisal? Date:

Name of collection/records series: _____

Collection Number: _____

Records Retention Schedules: _____

Donor's/Record Creator's Contact Information:

Biography/History: _____

Relationship with/within repository:

Correspondence/collection file reviewed? _____

Agreements (e.g. Deed of Gift, Records Transfer Forms): _____

Acquisition dates: _____

Content of collection/series:

Has the collection been used? _____

If yes, how many times and when? _____

Is it cited in a publication or exhibit? _____

Where is the collection described:

Paper finding aid: _____

Online catalog records: _____

EAD: _____

Elsewhere: _____

Physical condition and history of conservation treatments:

World Cat and NUCMC search results: _____

Financial files/Foundation records: _____

Collecting policies from the date(s) of acquisition: _____

Who owns the collection? How? _____

DECISION: _____

3. Kansas Historical Society Deaccessioning Form for Government Records

RECORD DEACCESSION ORDER

These records are to be deaccessioned from the State Archives for (circle one):

Disposal (Recycle) or Destruction (Shred) or Return to agency

Database ID #	Series Title	Date(s)
Agency / Collection		
Location	Quantity	
Accession #		
Restriction		
Retention Schedule ID# (Note any schedule changes needed.)		
Reason for Deaccession		

Request Date

Staff

Authorization / Completion:

Date

State Archivist

Authorization

Date

Records Specialist

Destroyed or Returned to Agency

Date

Registrar

Collection Records Updated

Date

Agency representative, if applicable

Records Returned

~~Record Deaccession Order Form (2/26/10)~~
Record Deaccession Order Form (01/08/2013)

Appendix B Donor Letter Information and Templates

Basic Considerations

Not all deaccessions require notification letters especially if a signed deed-of-gift states that the repository reserves the right to deaccession (transfer, return, dispose of) materials that do not meet retention criteria. The letter templates provided below are intended to satisfy the majority of deaccessions. By definition, templates will not work for extraordinary situations.

- When to write
 - As a courtesy when the donor is alive.
 - When the deed-of-gift directs the repository to notify the donor.
 - When you want to return the collection to the donor.
 - To notify the donor or heir that the collection will be transferred elsewhere
 - When a collection presents unique risk management problems (e.g., legal, public relations, when only portions of it will be accepted for transfer, etc.)

- Who to write
 - Whoever donated the collection and signed the deed-of-gift, or
 - The executor of the estate or
 - An heir to the donor, if known

- What to write
 - Keep it simple and free of professional jargon.
 - Acknowledge the donor's generosity.
 - Acknowledge the value of the collection.
 - State the circumstances that led to the decision to remove the collection from your holdings.
 - State your responsibility as the steward of this collection.
 - Describe your plan and why this serves the greater good.
 - Provide the donor with contact information that bridges both repositories if the collection was transferred. This closes the accountability loop and reassures the donor.

Dear (Donor or Heir),

There have been many changes [on this campus, within this agency/department/repository] since you donated your [cartoon, pop-up books, graphic novels, pulp fiction, Niagara Falls ephemera, menu] collection in [year donated]. We now limit what we collect to the areas of [labor, law, politics, agriculture]. As you can see, your collection falls outside those areas but it is no less important now than it was when you generously donated it.

Your collection requires long term stewardship that better serves researchers. It also deserves to be housed with similar collections. Towards that end, I am pleased to report that your collection will be transferred to [name of new repository] on or by [give a date, timeline]. This collection is a welcomed

addition to their holdings.

If you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact me or [name of the new archivist and provide contact information].

[Closing]

Dear (Donor or Heir),

I am writing to you in connection with the [person's papers] at the [name of repository].

The [name of repository] has recently completed a reevaluation of its collecting policies and has, of necessity, more narrowly focused its collecting scope. Under the strictures of the new collecting policy, we have concluded that the [name of repository] is no longer a suitable repository for the [person's papers]. We are therefore offering to return [person's papers] to you, at our expense.

We apologize for any inconvenience and are available to answer any questions or concerns regarding our decision and the return of the material. [If applicable, enter regulations of state abandoned property law; for example: In the event we do not receive a reply to this correspondence within sixty days, we will have authority under the state abandoned property act to determine the further disposal of the collection.]

I have included my contact information below. Please feel free to contact me regarding the return of [person's] material or to ask me any questions. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

[Closing]

Appendix C
Deed of Gift with Language Addressing the Possibility of Deaccession

I own (or have legal authority over) the materials described below and voluntarily give them to the [name of repository] as a donation.

It is distinctly understood that the purpose and intention of this gift is to transfer and grant all such rights, title, and interest (including but not limited to, property rights and copyrights) I possess in these materials to the [name of repository]. I understand that the [repository] will make these materials publicly accessible. I give consent to the [repository] to digitally reformat the collection or migrate existing digital content to new technical environments as appropriate for preservation and/or access purposes.

In the event that I, my heirs, or my designees donate additional property I own or over which I have legal authority, to the [repository] in the future, title to the donated items shall pass to the [repository] upon their delivery, and all of the provisions of this instrument of gift shall apply.

The [repository] may use its discretion to dispose of material inappropriate for its collections, unless I initial the box at bottom.

MATERIALS BEING DONATED:

DONATED BY:

Telephone

SIGNATURES:

Signature of Donor

Date

Received by

[Name of Repository]

Date



With the exception of duplicates; empty binders, folders, covers, and picture frames; and publications neither by or about the collection creator, which will be disposed of by the [repository], other material in the donation not retained by the [repository] shall first be offered to the donor by registered letter. If the donor is deceased, does not respond to the letter within 90 days, or declines to receive the materials, the Center may dispose of them.

Appendix D Reappraisal and Deaccessioning Bibliography

The Deaccessioning and Reappraisal Development and Review Team conducted an extensive literature review and policy search prior to drafting the guidelines. Appendices D and E list the relevant articles and policies that were reviewed. Most of the resources in Appendix D were annotated and the annotated bibliography can be accessed online: <http://www2.archivists.org/groups/reappraisal-and-deaccessioning-development-and-review-team/annotated-bibliography>.

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Call for Comments on *Guidelines for Reappraisal and Deaccessioning*

Since beginning the view process in late 2015, TS-GRD has assiduously gathered community feedback on the *Guidelines*. TS-GRD solicited comments from:

- A. SAA groups consulted via listerv and/or announcement at SAA annual meeting
 - i. Archives and Archivists listserv
 - ii. SAA Leaders listserv
 - iii. Acquisitions and Appraisal Section
 - iv. Manuscript Repositories Section
 - v. Government Records Section
 - vi. Museum Archives Section
 - vii. Collection Management Tools Roundtable
 - viii. Public Library Archives/Special Collections RT
 - ix. Labor Archives Roundtable
 - x. Research Libraries Roundtable

- B. External groups consulted
 - i. Rare Books and Manuscripts Division of ACRL
 - ii. Society of California Archivists
 - iii. Midwest Archives Conference
 - iv. Society of Rocky Mountain Archivists
 - v. Delaware Valley Archives Group
 - vi. Archivists Round Table of Metropolitan New York
 - vii. Association of Canadian Archivists

- C. Other:
 - i. Announcement on webpage: <http://www2.archivists.org/groups/technical-subcommittee-on-guidelines-for-reappraisal-and-deaccessioning-ts-grd>
 - ii. Announcements in In the Loop: September 10, 2014, November 25, 2015, December 9, 2015
 - iii. Held open forum at SAA 2015 general meeting in Cleveland, OH. Provided overview of the *Guidelines*, answered questions and received comments from audience members.

Comments Received and Committee's Recommended Actions

1. Replace outdated Kansas State Historical Society form with newer version
Recommendation: Replace

2. Replace outdated definitions with current ones from the Dictionary Working Group

- Recommendation: Replace
3. Add “records management policies” to Appendix A, Review your institution’s collecting and collection management policies
 Recommendation: Fold into existing step to review
 4. Add language addressing the reappraisal of digital collections, and how it might generate additional or different activities
 Recommendation: Add a sentence about the guidelines being format neutral in the notes section.
 5. Under II.2, Review Your Repository’s Collection Policy: The use of the terms “subject/geographical areas”. Should we omit or edit?
 Recommendation: Delete specifics
 6. Under Section II. Preparation: Add “Step 6: Review your institution's records management policies. They often dictate how deaccessioned material must be disposed.”
 Recommendation: Add language to steps 2 and 3 to make more inclusive for institutional archives
 7. Under Section IV.3.C: Strengthen the point that reappraisal and deaccessioning should not be used to raise funds for budget shortfalls or emergencies.
 Recommendation: Add reference to museum policies, note there are no guiding factors in SAA’s Code of Ethics
 8. Under Section IV.5: Add a sentence underscoring the importance of clearly documenting decision making as an ethical and professional practice for archivists
 Recommendation: Add language making it clear that the decision process is documented. Also will reference the SAA Code of Ethics in the relevant Guiding Principle
 9. Include additional step in Appendix A, “Ensure the process has been documented”
 Recommendation: Add this.
 10. Revise cover page to reflect new version; add paragraph to introduction about the creation of the guidelines
 Recommendation: Revise and add

Positive feedback received about the *Guidelines*

1. I’ve reviewed the existing document and found it makes sense to me. I’ve never deaccessioned anything, but have collections which contain materials which we probably should. We do have a collections policy and deed of gift form which includes language about disposing of materials. I have used both of them to either

turn down materials or to dispose of parts of collections which did not fit with what we collect.

I am glad to see that the guidelines include check lists and sample deaccession policies from other dioceses. The latter should make it easier to create our own and to justify it to superiors here in our diocese. I hope that these examples will be either retained or replaced by even better ones.

2. I did read through the policy and it's well done. I appreciate the effort made to consult a wide group of agencies and policies to put together a very effective process.

TS-GRD Review Plan

Overview

The TS-GRD will begin formal review of the SAA Guidelines for Reappraisal and Deaccessioning in August 2015. The review plan includes a rigorous outreach initiative beginning prior to the formal review. The intent is to attract broad interest through publications and a strong presence at SAA 2015. The call for comments is set to begin in September 2015. The remainder of the timeline depends largely on the feedback received during the initial comment period, and the TS-GRD's subsequent recommendation to revise, reaffirm, or rescind the standard. Regardless, the review will be completed by August 2017.

Proposed Timeline

April 2015: Review plan approved by Standards Committee

August 2015: Commence formal review

September 2015: Begin call for comments, consult with groups and organizations, and solicit general feedback.

January 2016: Based on feedback, determine if Guidelines should be revised, reaffirmed, or rescinded

Fall 2016: If TS recommends revising or rescinding the standard, submit package of information to Standards Committee

Spring 2017: If TS recommends reaffirming the standard, submit information package to Standards Committee

August 2017: Review cycle ends.

Preliminary Outreach and Advocacy Activities

TS-GRD members will undertake a number of activities in order to increase awareness of the guidelines, and to broadly communicate about the upcoming review process. These activities will include:

- Presentations at regional and local archival meetings to publicize the guidelines
- Publication of case studies about using the guidelines in reappraisal and deaccessioning projects, in partnership with the SAA Publications Board
- A lunch and learn event at the 2015 SAA annual meeting
- TS-GRD members will attend interested sections and roundtable meetings at the 2015 SAA annual meeting, to make announcements about the formal review process
- Name badge ribbons with a reappraisal related slogan will be given away at the 2015 SAA annual meeting to build awareness of the guidelines and the review process

Consultation with SAA subgroups and non-SAA organizations

Once the review begins, the TS-GRD plans to consult with several SAA sections and roundtables, regional archives groups, and other library and archives organizations. Consultation may include discussions with leadership and members by email, phone, or in person; publication of notices in newsletters and listservs; and responding to comments and feedback. Requests will also be sent to individuals who have used the Guidelines, and to those with expertise or interest in the fields of reappraisal and Deaccessioning. The TS-GRD will consult with the following groups:

- Acquisitions and Appraisal Section
- Manuscript Repositories Section
- Government Records Section
- Museum Archives Section
- Collection Management Tools RT
- Public Library Archives/Special Collections RT
- Rare Books and Manuscripts Division of ACRL
- Society of California Archivists
- Midwest Archives Conference
- Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference
- Society of Rocky Mountain Archivists
- Delaware Valley Archives Group
- Archivists Round Table of Metropolitan New York
- Association of Canadian Archivists

Proposed joint meetings with subgroups and organizations to discuss proposed revisions

Should the guidelines require significant revision, the TS-GRD will propose meeting with the Acquisitions and Appraisal steering committee. This section's chair serves ex-officio on the TS-GRD and is the section most closely-aligned to the subjects of reappraisal and deaccessioning. The TS-GRD may also propose meetings or open forums with interested organizations.

Proposed public hearings at SAA annual meeting

An open forum should be held during the SAA 2016 annual meeting to discuss proposed revisions (if necessary). In addition, we may also submit a session proposal using the case studies gathered during a recent request for experiences with the guidelines.

Proposed publications, websites, or other communication media via which comments and proposed revisions will be submitted and be made publicly available

The TS-GRD will use the following communication media:

- TS-GRD webpage: will include announcement of review, link to the current standard, and proposed revisions (if necessary).
- Announcement in Archival Outlook and In the Loop
- Announcement in section, roundtable, and outside organizations' newsletters, including those listed above

- Announcement in section, roundtable, and archives organizations' listservs

The TS-GRD will accept comments by email. We may also set up a site such as digress.it, where individuals can post comments alongside the text of the standard.