

ACRL/RBMS-SAA Joint Task Force on the Development of Standardized Holdings Counts and Measures for Archival Repositories and Special Collections Libraries

ALA Midwinter Meeting -- Atlanta Sunday 22 January 2017 * 1:00 - 2:30 * Westin (Piedmont 3)

Task Force Members Attending: Martha Conway (University of Michigan), Haven Hawley (University of Florida) (recording)

Others Attending: Morag Boyd (Ohio State University), Jeanann Haas (University of Pittsburgh), EC Schroeder (Yale University), Weatherly Stephan (New York University)

1. Welcome and Introductions

Martha welcomed the group and we all introduced ourselves.

2. Discussion of proposed “Level 1 Count” for quantifying and sharing information about holdings

We had a wide-ranging and very instructive conversation about the proposed “Level 1 Count.” Highlights and take-aways include:

- There is a need for more and better guidance regarding how to count specific types/formats of collection material including (for example) microforms, web archives/harvested web content, data sets, scrapbooks, architectural models, architectural records, and framed works of art.
- There is a need to better call out and define “described online and therefore discoverable.”
- There is a need for more and better guidance regarding born-digital and digitized collection material, including derivatives, access/use copies, and “what gets counted and what doesn't.” There was general agreement that sooner rather than later we are all going to be dealing with more and more that is “born digital,” even if we aren't dealing with it (effectively or at all) now. The guidelines should consider and incorporate this reality.
- There is a desire to know more about the “Level 2 Count” and maybe, depending on what it ends up being, the “Level 3 Count.” There was general agreement that interest in counts and measures that are beyond or deeper or more granular than what has been proposed as a “Level 1 Count” -- such as counts of physical units held and distinctions between various types of content-specific “carriers” -- will depend on institutional needs, resources, and priorities. Whatever is developed/proposed to accompany or “come after” the “Level 1 Count” should acknowledge the institution-specific context in which a “Level 2” or “Level 3” count would be undertaken.

We discussed the fact that the Task Force was charged with developing guidelines “for archival repositories and special collections libraries.” Yet at many of our institutions, there are important collections of cultural heritage material that are stewarded (or not) outside the walls of the special collections library and even beyond the purview of the university library. Will there be interest on the part of other campus units and/or the museum community, for example, in adopting -- or adapting -- these guidelines?

We agreed that there is tremendous value in a pilot, or partnership, in which a group of us agrees to (1) conduct a “Level 1 Count” on some or all of our holdings and (2) share issues, concerns, problems, successes, etc. with each other (in “real time”) and with the larger community (later). We could accomplish the latter by way of a joint program with our “sister” Task Force (on Standardized Statistical Measures for Public Services).