Efficiency, Extensibility, and Simplicity

A Systematic Approach to Processing Archival Collections at the Bentley Historical Library using Google Sheets

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Land Acknowledgment Statement
The Problem

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Number of Accessions</th>
<th>Physical Extent (Linear Feet)</th>
<th>Digital Extent (GB)</th>
<th>Processing Projects Remaining (General Backlog Only)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Backlog</td>
<td>2206</td>
<td>8460.475</td>
<td>16321.13214</td>
<td>1199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requested</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>901.7</td>
<td>23.22195</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-Progress</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>718.21</td>
<td>60.2948741</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>2269</strong></td>
<td><strong>10,080.385</strong></td>
<td><strong>16,404.64897</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Researching the Tools

• Conducted a literature review.
  • Efficient processing methodologies.
  • Processing management, assessment, and prioritization.
  • Project management tools.

• Settled on a weighted scoring model built using Google Sheets.

• The benefits of using Google Sheets include:
  • Efficiency.
  • Extensibility.
  • Simplicity.
Constructing the Model

• Periodically met with the Assistant Director for Collections Management.

• Chosen scoring criteria for each accession included:
  • Length of time in backlog.
  • The number of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) identity factors.
  • Processing priority assigned by field archivist (curator).

• Non-scoring criteria were also incorporated into the model.

• Accession data was periodically exported from ArchivesSpace, normalized, and/or reviewed.
The Result: A Weighted Scoring Model

- Consists of four interconnected Google Sheets:
  - Scoring Criteria.
  - Formats and Drop-Down List Options.
  - Accession Data and Scores.
  - Processing Scoring Model.

- Tools and features include conditional and data formatting rules, filter views, macros, pivot tables, slicers, etc.

- Novel documentation was created and extant documentation (e.g., the Bentley’s processing manual) was updated.
Processing Impact (Year 1)

- Bentley staff and students **completely processed** 32 accessions representing 91.3 linear feet and 88.9 GB from the backlog using this model.

- Bentley staff and students **made significant progress** on 19 accessions representing 628 linear feet (and a large amount of TBD digital material).
Strengths and Weaknesses

• Strengths include:
  • Provides a simple, birds-eye view of the Bentley’s processing backlog.
  • Facilitates processing project assignment by the Assistant Director for Collections Management.
  • Unearths possible processing projects previously hidden in the backlog.

• Weaknesses include:
  • Maintenance and monthly updates are very manual processes.
  • Documentation is substantial.
  • Accession data is taken at face value.
Future Work

• Incorporating visualizations into the scoring model.

• Automating the model’s periodic updates (e.g., using the ArchivesSpace and Google Sheets APIs).

• Publishing on the model in greater detail and, ultimately, making the model available via a platform like GitHub (dependent on community interests).
Selected References


- For additional sources, please see the “Systematic Processing” collection in this Zotero Library.
Thank you!

Questions?

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