Efficiency, Extensibility, and Simplicity

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

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The Problem

	Total Number of Accessions	Physical Extent (Linear Feet)	Digital Extent (GB)	Processing Projects Remaining (General Backlog Only)
General Backlog	2206	8460.475	16321.13214	**1199**
Requested	23	901.7	23.22195	N/A
In-Progress	40	718.21	60.2948741	N/A
TOTAL	**2269**	**10,080.385**	**16,404.64897**	

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

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- For additional sources, please see the "Systematic Processing" collection in this Zotero Library.

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Thank you!

Questions?

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