

# **Efficiency, Extensibility, and Simplicity: A Systematic Approach to Processing Archival Collections at the Bentley Historical Library using Google Sheets**

**STEVEN GENTRY**

## **Abstract**

Like many institutions, the University of Michigan's Bentley Historical Library (BHL) has a physical and digital backlog that has persisted over the years despite intensive processing efforts. In December 2021, the author was tasked with helping develop a solution to systematically reduce this backlog. The outcome of this work was the creation of a weighted scoring model that 1.) provides the Assistant Director for Collections Management (AD) with a broad range of information about backlog accessions and 2.) automatically calculates their scores based on several criteria. This allows the AD to efficiently and effectively assign processing projects and, ultimately, facilitate the backlog's elimination.

The presentation will begin with a brief introduction about the project's inception, how a literature review inspired the selection of a scoring model created in Google Sheets, and how the tool was constructed. This will include a short description of the iterative approach used to standardize accession data; how Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) characteristics were identified in accessions; and the role of these characteristics in processing prioritization. The presentation will then provide an overview of how the model works as well as its various tools and features (e.g., pivot tables). Finally, after highlighting the model's strengths, weaknesses, and impacts on processing in its first year of use, the author will conclude with a brief description of the project's potential next steps.

## **About the author**

**Steven Gentry** is an Archivist for Archival Processing at the University of Michigan's Bentley Historical Library (BHL). His responsibilities include processing multi-format accessions, maintaining and refreshing the BHL's processing documentation, and assisting with projects designed to systematically reduce the BHL's backlog. He also co-chairs the BHL's Reparative and Inclusive Description Committee.