

## **Caring for Collections: Accessioning and Effective Archival Stewardship**

**MEAGHAN O'RIORDAN AND ROSEMARY K. J. DAVIS**

Archival accessioning is often defined as taking physical, legal, and intellectual custody of newly acquired collection material. But this simplistic definition does not reflect the human experiences of physical, intellectual, and emotional labor--which can include juggling logistics, managing donor relations, and providing foundational archival description--performed during accessioning.

In 2019, Rosemary K. J. Davis, Accessioning Archivist for the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Yale University, and Meaghan O'Riordan, Accessioning Archivist for the Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives & Rare Book Library at Emory University, embarked upon a research project to examine archival accessioning labor throughout the United States. This research focuses on a deep examination of current accessioning labor with an accompanying analysis about ways to make this work more visible and effective.

Their talk will provide an overview of their research to date, including a labor survey and on-site visits. Davis and O'Riordan will also delve into their recently launched Best Practices for Archival Accessioning Working Group, which aims to develop a suite of adaptable, holistic workflows that can be used to implement and strengthen accessioning practices throughout the field.

Developing a better understanding of how repositories define and navigate accessioning is crucial illuminating the and bringing visibility to the labor involved to performing special collections stewardship rooted in transparency and mutual trust between all parties. Through this forum and their research, Davis and O'Riordan hope to kickstart thoughtful conversations within the profession about how to empathetically and efficiently care for collections through well-defined accessioning best practices.

### **About the authors:**

**Rosemary K. J. Davis** is the accessioning archivist for the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University. She earned her MSLIS + Archives certificate from Pratt Institute. She serves on the steering committee for SAA's Women Archivists Section, as chair of SAA's Committee on Ethics and Professional Conduct, and as managing editor for the Journal of Contemporary Archival Studies. She is also co-chair for SAA's National Best Practices for Archival Accessioning Working Group.

**Meaghan O'Riordan** is the accessioning archivist for the Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives and Rare Book Library at Emory University. She earned her MLS from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and also holds a master's degree in Theological Studies from the Candler

School of Theology at Emory University. She is currently on the steering committee for SAA's Accessioning, Acquisitions and Appraisal Section and co-chair of SAA's National Best Practices for Archival Accessioning Working Group.