

Cross-functional Collaboration

The Placement of Archival Processing in ARL Libraries

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Introduction

As part of an administrative reorganization in the Harold B. Lee Library, we sought to determine whether best practices exist for the placement of processing units in academic libraries and whether organizational structures correlate with other statistical measures. A literature review suggests the need for such a study, which has been studied for library technical services but has had little published related to archival processing units. Two studies were conducted to help determine what models are currently in place and assess administrators' perception of the efficacy of these models.

Research Method

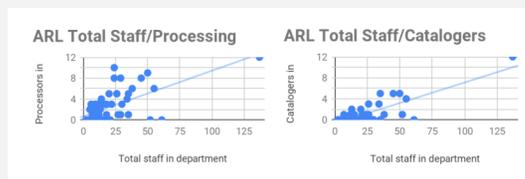
In order to address our questions we conducted two related organizational studies.

- **Study 1** examined staff directories and organizational charts of ARL member libraries (available via websites)
- **Study 2** gathered qualitative data from ARL libraries to examine library administrators' experience with their organizational structure

Results

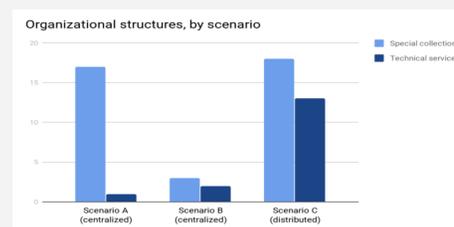
Preliminary survey

- Found that 66 percent had special collections staff members with titles associated with processing
- Availability of processing staff varied by special collections department size
- On average, ARL special collections departments had 20 staff, including two processors and one cataloger



Qualitative survey

- Survey identified three configurations of processing and cataloging staff in ARL libraries
- Found no correlation between staff size and standards implementation
- Qualitative responses noted differing strengths between scenarios



Findings

- Approach to managing processing often based on resources (e.g., smaller special collections departments less likely to have dedicated staff, catalogers)
- Most special collections use either a distributed model or are vertically integrated within their special collections department
- A small number of ARL libraries have begun integrating processing with other metadata-creating units in technical services

Conclusions

- Informed by these study results, the Lee Library administration moved the processing unit to technical services division due to focus on description
- Continued monitoring of organizational effectiveness with new structure needed
- Additional consultation with administrators and staff from institutions where archival processing has been placed in technical services would be beneficial