Preservation through Access: Minimal Processing at the Heinz History Center

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MARAC Fall 2015
Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania
Relaunched as the Heinz History Center

Increased Collecting
Goals of the Project

- Over 2,000 linear ft
- Reduce backlog by 3/4
- All types of collections
Why did the History Center need minimal processing?

- 500-600 ft. of new material per year
- Staff reductions
- Decreased grant funding
- Default Detailed Processing
Did minimal processing represent a big change for the History Center?

- Notion of “processed” changed
- Access typically given to unprocessed collections
- Took serendipity out of the equation
Prior to the Project

- Small pilot project
- Revamped descriptive guidelines
- Collection management database
MPLP 101

Christine Weideman, Dan Santamaria, Robert S. Cox, PASCL

Photo: Johannes Jansson
How Much Preservation Work Can We Do?

- New Boxes and Folders when needed
- Folder loose items
- Don’t overfill boxes
How Much Preservation Work Can We Do?

- Deframe
- Separate newsprint
- Interleave photographs
- Wrapping volumes
Collections are better off now

And there were unexpected benefits…
Circulation Through Storage Areas
Shrinking collection size

Deframing
Efficient Housing
Weeding
Restricting material with security or privacy concerns
Separating Museum Objects

Processed holdings helps other divisions
a/v and born-digital material

Potential funding opportunities
Strategic Planning

Informs future budgets, grants, etc.
Preservation of Future Collections
Avoid looking unprofessional!

Fill the reading room!

Document and advocate!
Thank You!

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