Processing for Access

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Abstract: This article describes a method for gaining progressively refined control over holdings using provenancial arrangement. Arrangement techniques for both personal papers and corporate records, either organized or disorganized, are demonstrated. The system of access is based on a floating record group concept designed to identify all organic bodies of records in a repository. Access is provided on a logical and comprehensive basis rather than on a subjective and selective one.

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ARCHIVAL ARRANGEMENT IS A FORM OF COMMUNICATION by which the archivist conveys to the user the essence of the materials in an accession. The arrangement and its corresponding description determine which access points are available for the user. Access points can be artificial, as are the subject headings applied in books, or they can be an extension of the natural structure, if any, of the information mass. Archival arrangement generally follows the latter approach, capitalizing on the structure apparent in most sets of records. Records generated together are bound by their common origin, or provenance, and form natural informational units. Such organic records generally display a five-level hierarchy, each set having some combination of record group, subgroup, series, file unit, and item level characteristics. These two concepts, provenance and record levels, form the basis for a set of guidelines for systematically arranging and describing accessions. These guidelines are sometimes referred to as the Berner or University of Washington system because Richard Berner, the university's former archivist, has been the most vocal proponent of this style of processing. The general development and application of these guidelines is discussed elsewhere.[1] This article focuses more closely on the basic arrangement and description decisions processors face when applying the guidelines. Because the application of the guidelines varies slightly between organized and disorganized materials, sample accessions of both types will be discussed and the processing steps to be followed in each will be described.

Any debate over processing methods concerns two issues: how to efficiently arrange an unorganized accession or deal with a previously ordered accession, and how to effectively convey the arranged information. Solutions to these problems vary greatly, providing no consistent standard for processors.[2]

The archival literature generally offers no remedies, in part because most authors do not focus on processing procedures. Muller, Feith, and Fruin and David Gracy, in their respective general manuals on arrangement and description, do present a range of processing alternatives, but they use the alternatives primarily as examples to explain basic principles. They never explicitly consider the alternatives in the context of the processing workflow.[3] The manuals provide background but no instruction. Similarly, SAA's handbook on inventory techniques is not as useful as it might be because it lacks any analysis of the descriptive alternatives included. Moreover, the handbook presents inventories as static finding aids composed of fixed elements rather than as dynamic finding aids that reflect whatever processing has been completed.[4] The most detailed evaluation of processing alternatives is Richard Lytle's study of the provenance and content indexing methods. His analysis of the respective strengths and

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[1]Richard C. Berner and Uli Haller, "Principles of Archival Inventory Construction," *American Archivist*, 47 (Spring 1984): 134–155.

[2]Franch B. Evans, "Modern Methods of Arrangement of Archives in the United States," *American Archivist*, 29 (April 1966): 241–263 and Richard C. Berner, *Archival Theory and Practice in the United States: A Historical Analysis* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1983) discuss the historical roots of this problem.

[3]S. Muller, J. A. Feith and R. Fruin, *Manual for the Arrangement and Description of Archives*, trans. Arthur H. Leavitt, (New York: H.W. Wilson Company, 1968); David B. Gracy II, *Archives & Manuscripts: Arrangement & Description* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1977).

[4]Society of American Archivists Committee on Finding Aids, *Inventories and Registers: A Handbook of Techniques and Examples* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1976).

weaknesses of those methods suggests that they should be used in a complementary fashion. Yet Lytle never tested an integrated system, and he left it up to the processor to devise the means of integrating the two different approaches into a single processing workflow.[5] The procedures outlined below offer solutions to these problems. The purpose of this article is to show how one particular theoretical approach is carried out in practice rather than to compare and contrast these procedures with the various alternatives.

Arrangement and description are usually not one-shot procedures. In many situations, particularly with large accessions, archivists progressively refine control, moving by stages from a general overview to detailed access.[6] Berner's approach is based on this progression. Because each accession is unique, the details of producing the access points vary somewhat from accession to accession. Yet the basic procedures are always the same: first group the accession folders or items according to their provenance and then outline, record level by record level, whatever order they exhibit. This systematic arrangement and description produces a complete summary of the accession materials in the form of a list of the natural descriptions at each of the record levels. The resulting inventories, while they may look austere, are very functional. If they do not provide a great deal of background information, they do precisely describe the holdings at hand.

Good access requires the ability to find relevant materials and to dismiss irrelevant materials. The precise and systematic descriptions generated by progressively refined processing give users both of these capabilities.

Archivists also benefit from a system of progressive control. Backlogs remain minimal because even initial processing establishes some access points for each accession. The workflow also sets the stage for formal "appraisal in context," allowing for increasingly specific retention decisions at each more refined level of control. Any undesirable record sets can be weeded before further processing at each level. Appraisal thus complements processing and ceases to be an added task.[7]

Processing begins at the physical level of organization evident in the records. Physical organization refers only to the obvious aggregation of materials in the accession: pages, folders, or boxes. When pages are grouped in well-labeled folders, processing moves from folder to folder. This folder level of organization is most common, though some records are so disorganized that they must be processed page by page.

Distinct from these physical levels are the conceptual levels: record groups, subgroups, series, file units, and items.[8] Conceptual levels provide the internal structure of records.[9] Provenance applies not just to an accession as a whole, but also to each of its parts. For example, a set of folders constitute a record group

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[5] Richard H. Lytle, "Intellectual Access to Archives," *American Archivist*, 43 (Winter 1980): 64–75, and (Spring 1980): 191–207.

[6] Amy Wood Nyholm, "Modern Manuscripts: A Functional Approach," *Library Resources and Technical Services*, 14 (Summer 1970): 325–340; Lydia Lucas, "Massive Collections: From Warehouse to Reading Room," *Georgia Archive*, 4 (Winter 1976): 56–63.

[7] Uli Haller, "Appraisal in Context," *Provenance*, 1 (Fall 1983): 65–71.

[8] Because file units are often individual folders, that level is also sometimes called the folder level. To avoid confusion, throughout this article file unit is used to designate the conceptual level and folder the physical level.

[9] Michel Duchein, "Theoretical Principles and Practical Problems of *Respect des Fonds* in Archival Science," *Archivaria*, 16 (1983): 64–82, presents this as the "principle of structure."

when they share a general origin, as when all were produced by one agency; they constitute a subgroup when they share a more particular origin, as when all were produced by one division of that agency. A subgroup can range in physical size from a single folder to several hundred boxes. So, too, can the other conceptual levels, though such wide variation is uncommon within a single accession.

The hierarchy of conceptual levels is pyramidal. A file unit is one subunit of a particular series, which in turn is a subunit of a particular subgroup within a particular record group.
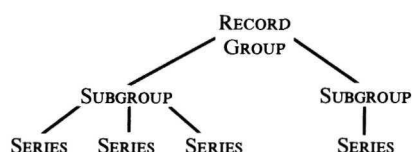
In some cases, as will be discussed later, a series may also fall directly under a record group. By maintaining or arranging the physical sets of records in a logical sequence that conforms to this intrinsic conceptual hierarchy, the processor can most effectively utilize the natural descriptors in the accession.

Every successive conceptual level of arrangement breaks the accession into distinct units, each of which in turn can be further refined (or ignored) as the processor sees fit. Each completed step gives an overview of the work left to do: subgrouping provides a list of the organic sets of records; establishing series provides a summary of the types of materials included; listing file units provides a description of specific materials. Processing is never complete, it is merely halted

at logical points within the accession and can be resumed from these points at any time. Because of the hierarchical nature of the processing, the whole accession is under some degree of control from the moment it is accessioned.

Those being the theoretical underpinnings, the practical purpose of this approach is to produce a structured list of index terms that clearly describes the material in the accession. Structured means that the terms will be hierarchically arranged to signify the conceptual levels. This is demonstrated in Figure 1.

How does one move from the records themselves to such an outline? As mentioned, processing begins by fixing the provenance of the various physical sets of records in the accession. This can be broken into two steps: (1) identifying the agent responsible for generating the records, and (2) determining the capacity(ies) in which that agent worked. These two facets of the organic origin correspond roughly to the record group and subgroup levels.

Record group is usually defined in an absolute way, tied to a particular level in an administrative hierarchy. The term most often refers to the records of a major department or an independent agency. Berner takes the more relative approach of shifting the record group designation to the highest administrative level actually present within an accession.[10] Subgroups are also relative. They are the organizational or familial subsets within an accession. For example, the records of an agency are treated as a record group when accessioned alone, but they are treated as a subgroup when accessioned along with the records of the

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[10]Duchein identifies a minimalist approach in which the archivist pegs the record group level to the lowest administrative level, either the smallest or the lowest ranking offices. Berner's approach often results in minimalist practice, though it does not specifically fix the record group at any set level.

Schematic Outline:	Sample Accession:
Record Group Name	Morgan Family Papers
Subgroup Name	Jean Morgan Papers
Sub-Subgroup Name	Galveston Public Health Nursing Service
Series Title	Annual Reports
Series Title	Miscellany
Sub-Subgroup Name	Women's Health Protective Association
Subgroup Name	William Morgan Papers
Series Title	General Series
Sub-Series Title	General Correspondence
Folder/Item Heading	Connally, Thomas
Folder/Item Heading	Jones, Roy M.
Folder/Item Heading	MacGill, Eileen
Folder/Item Heading	Morgan, Jean
Folder/Item Heading	Taylor, T. O.
Folder/Item Heading	Torbert, John Keith
Sub-Subgroup Name	Trinity Episcopal Church. Eaton Memorial Chapel Rehabilitation Committee

Figure 1: Hierarchical Levels

parent agency.[11] While the subgroups are subordinate record levels within an accession, they are equal indications of organic bodies of records. Although it may seem confusing at first, floating the record group and subgroup designations helps the archivist clearly label, by the name of the record's generator, every organic set of records in a repository. An index can then provide direct access to each of the names. Retrieval is strictly by proper name. The user need not know the administrative hierarchy to find the relevant records.

In practice the record group name serves as the accession title. Formally, the record group name/accession title is the highest administrative or familial entity to which all of the records belong. The accession title is found by asking, "Whose papers are these? Who generated (created or collected) them?"

[11]P. J. Scott, C. D. Smith, and G. Finlay, "Archives and Administrative Change," *Archives and Manuscripts*, 7 (August 1978): 115–127, 7 (April 1979): 151–165, 8 (April 1980): 41–54, 8 (December 1980): 51–69, 9 (September 1981): 3–18, describe a similar approach used by the Australian National Archives.

In systems that do peg the record group to a specific administrative level, this question is a search for the ultimate authority responsible for the records; delegated authority identifies the subgroups. In this system, it is a practical question about actors and activities. All records are generated only by individuals or organizations. Organization means a defined body, usually legally or administratively constituted, that bears a distinct name: National Science Foundation, Boeing Aircraft Company, or Wednesday Club. The "whose papers?" question separates actors from their products or actions. This helps clarify the description and provides the basis for linking related records from disparate accessions. For example, with local tax records the county tax assessor is the agent, tax collection is the assigned function, and tax assessments are the record products. "Galveston County Tax Assessor Records" names the accession, while "Galveston County Tax Assessments" describes a specific record series.

Identifying the record group name is a straightforward matter. Figure 2 is a listing of the contents of the first two folders in a sample accession of disorganized records. Whose records are these? William Morgan's. All the documents are written to or by him. The description is just as straightforward: William Morgan papers (2 folders).

This simple arrangement and description will change as we inspect the other records in the accession. Figure 3 is the contents list for the next three folders. Whose records are these? They are Jean Morgan's. Were these records accessioned separately, we could regard them as a Jean Morgan record group. Yet, here, they are in the same accession with William Morgan's papers. Both sets have in common the more encompassing record group, the Morgan family papers.

In the context of this accession Jean Morgan's papers are a subgroup; so, too, are William Morgan's. The accession is now taking shape:

<center>Morgan Family Papers</center>

Folder	Subgroups
1–3	Jean Morgan Papers
4–5	William Morgan Papers

All the other folders in the accession need to be examined and arranged in the same way. The relative arrangement of the subgroups can follow any logical convention (I have used alphabetical order), but it is important that all the folders belonging to a particular subgroup be placed together to facilitate later processing. The Morgan family papers include many more records of William and Jean Morgan as well as records of other family members; however, the examples already presented are sufficient to demonstrate the process.

Having clearly labeled the record generators of our folders, we must next check whether the records were generated in any specific capacity. Capacity involves the same organized corporate body definition applied to organization above. It also implies active participation, something beyond mere membership. In looking over Jean Morgan's papers it is evident that the first two folders were generated by Morgan in her capacity as Galveston Public Health Nursing Service president. Morgan wrote the letters and reports on behalf of the nursing service, signing them as the president of the organization. These records are thus a subgroup of Galveston Public Health Nursing Service records among the Jean Morgan papers. Technically they are a sub-subgroup, though to simplify the description, it is usually possible to refer to them as a subgroup. Note that the subgroup designation here is not based on the administrative position of the nursing service (it is an independent body), but on the relative pro-

Folder heading: none
Contents:
> letter to William Morgan from Eileen MacGill, Oct. 26, 1941; personal.
> Major Roy M. Jones to cousin W.M., Oct. 8, 1918; re: army life.
> Jones to W.M., Nov. 13, 1941, Nov. 16, 1941; re: Army Air Corps.
> letter of W.M. to John Keith Torbert, Nov. 2, 1941; personal.
> W.M. to T.O. Taylor, Oct. 18, 1911; asks employment advice.
> letters to and from Jean Morgan, mother, May 2, 1908, July 18, 1908,
>   Jan. 6, 1909, May 23, 1910; personal.
> 7 letters to W.M. from Roy Jones, Dec. 21, 1943–Jan. 15, 1945;
>   re: Army Air Corps.
> Thomas Connally to W.M., Jan. 12, 1933; personal.

Folder heading: Trinity Episcopal Church
Contents:
> photo of "interior, second floor, Eaton Memorial Chapel," 1941.
> report of Eaton Memorial Chapel Rehabilitation Committee,
>   W.M. chairman, Oct. 8, 1941.
> letter of Rev. Clinton S. Quin, Bishop of Texas, to W.M.; re: chapel
>   renovation; May 26, 1945.
> letter of Andrew Fraser, engineer and architect, "submitting an
>   estimate of costs and repairs, remodelling and additions to Eaton
>   Memorial Chapel." To "William Morgan, Chairman," June, 1945.

Figure 2: Contents of Sample Folders from Unorganized Personal Papers

venancial relationships of the documents in this accession. The concern is, "how did these documents originate?" not "how did this organization originate?" Systematic pursuit of the first question provides the information to answer the second as well. Subgrouping identifies every organic body of records in each accession. Indexing the subgroup names provides direct access to the various sets of records making it possible to trace the administrative history of any organization. Even when an organization undergoes several name changes, record continuity is not lost. Records always contain references to previous organizational names (old letterheads, for example). By looking up these references the user will find the anteceding sets of documents. Formal cross-references can

supplement this intrinsic system. Much like author and title citations in bibliographic systems, clear and consistent subgrouping and direct name access allows the archival user to forgo less precise subject searches once past the initial research stage. As Lytle's study indicated, this sort of provenancial access complements rather than replaces subject access.

The third folder in Figure 3 is another subgroup. These are records generated in Morgan's capacity as Women's Health Protective Association president. Similarly, in Figure 2, the second folder includes the records generated by William Morgan as Trinity Episcopal Church Eaton Memorial Chapel Rehabilitation Committee chairman. For the moment the other folder in William Morgan's

papers is uncategorized. Putting these terms into context helps flesh out the description:

Morgan Family Papers

Folder	Subgroups
1–2	Jean Morgan Papers
	Subgroups
	Galveston Public Health
	Nursing Service
3	Women's Health Protective
	Association
4	William Morgan Papers
	Miscellany
5	**Subgroups**
	Trinity Episcopal Church.
	Eaton Memorial Chapel.
	Rehabilitation Committee.

Up to this point minimal subject analysis has been required. The examples (Figures 2 and 3) include content notes, though it is rarely necessary to write these out in practice. A quick glance through each folder is usually sufficient to determine the generator and the capacity. The description follows naturally and quickly, with minimal subjectivity in the choice of access points. This little bit of processing has already yielded several good index terms and produced a general outline of the subject matter in the accession.

To ensure that all the organizational records in a repository are identified, each accession should at least be subgrouped. Processing could stop here, but the content notes do show there are many more good access points not yet listed in the inventory. The decision on how thoroughly to process an accession depends on a number of factors, including apparent quality of the materials, time available, and anticipated use. Whatever that decision, processing continues to the desired specificity level by level, with the processor first listing series, then file units, and, finally, items. Typically, processing is uneven, with some portions of an accession receiving more attention than others. For example,

general correspondence series are often processed to the file unit or item level, while clippings or reports are left as unrefined series.

When analyzing series the absence of subgroup characteristics is as significant as their presence. Folder 4 of the Morgan family papers includes William Morgan's correspondence with family and friends. As the letters were not written in any particular capapcity, they belong to no subgroup. Naturally they are still part of the William Morgan subgroup and the Morgan family record group. These sorts of records make up the general series of the parent record group or subgroup. In this instance the letters are items in the general series, general correspondence.

Folder	Subgroups
4	William Morgan Papers
	General Series
	General Correspondence

In such unorganized records the series designations are often somewhat arbitrary. To find the series the processor asks, "What patterns are there among the records?" Series are generally established according to a similarity of form, subject, or function. Unlike other series, the general series designation is polite fiction, since the record series that fall under it are separate series leftover from the subgrouping process. They do not constitute a coherent record series in the accepted sense of the term. General series serves only as a convenient umbrella under which to place all the leftover series of a particular subgroup or record group.

The other series designations are less artificial, but they may still be open to debate. To my eye a folder containing letters to and from various parties represents general correspondence. Others might want to segregate these records into incoming and outgoing correspondence series. While these patterns

Folder heading: Galveston Public Health Nursing Service
Contents:
letter from Jean Morgan to Mrs. J. C. League, detailing history of the
    organization, May 17, 1937.
letter from J.M. to prospective subscribers, Dec., 1936.
report of the president, J.M., Jan. 29, 1937; includes short history
    of the organization.
letter of H. Renfert to members of the Advisory Committee,
    Feb. 5, 1937.
first annual message of the president, J.M., delivered Nov., 1937.

Folder heading: Galveston Public Health Nursing Service
Contents:
annual report Public Health Nursing Service (PHNS), July 1930–
    July 1931, prepared by president J.M.
annual report PHNS, July 1932–July 1933, by president J.M.
annual report PHNS, July 1933–July 1934, by president J.M.
annual report Red Cross PHNS, July 1934–July 1935,
    by president J.M.
annual report Red Cross PHNS, July 1935–July 1936,
    by president J.M.
annual report Galveston PHNS, July 1936–July 1937,
    by president J.M.
annual report Galveston PHNS, July 1937–July 1938,
    by president J.M.

Folder heading: Women's Health Protective Assn.
Contents:
list of members, 1921.
annual report, 1919-1920, by president J.M.
letter of president J.M. to board of directors, Jan. 15, 1921;
    outlines agenda for coming meeting.
infant care pamphlet published by assn., n.d.

**Figure 3: Contents of Sample Folders from Unorganized Personal
Papers**

will vary slightly from processor to pro-
cessor, the variations are relatively unim-
portant, providing the records are
subgrouped before the series are
designated. As Oliver Holmes notes, it is
possible that some series may need to be
shifted to other subgroups at this stage, if
the more detailed inspection of the
records reveals a different origin than
first suspected.[12] The first subgroup
designation is not irrevocable, but each
series must eventually come to rest within
one subgroup or be constituted as a
residual series of the larger record group.
One of the purposes of subgrouping is to
give the processor a complete overview of
all the records of a particular origin.
Series patterns are more evident when all
the records from the same generating
source are together. Access is also more
direct when all the records in a series are
brought together than when they are left
scattered throughout the accession.

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[12] Oliver W. Holmes, "Archival Arrangement—Five Different Operations at Five Different Levels,"
American Archivist 27 (January 1964): 31–32.

Although the categorization of Morgan's correspondence as a general correspondence series adds no descriptive access points to the inventory, it is a necessary step in the arrangement process since it provides the context for the terms that will follow. Choosing those terms is again a matter of choosing an arrangement that will naturally supply them. What patterns are there? None are immediately apparent. Any useful order can be imposed. As with the designation of series, the choice of arrangement within unorganized series is based only on experience and practical considerations. These letters could be arranged chronologically, though if that were done some content indexing would be needed to identify the correspondents. The alphabetical order chosen here has the advantage of being self-indexing, a feature which can reduce the overall processing time required for an accession.

Date and subject content are not ignored in choosing an alphabetical order, they just become subordinate descriptive elements, referring only to specific units of correspondence:

Folder	Subgroups	Dates
4	William Morgan Papers	
	General Series	
	General Correspondence	
	Connally, Thomas	1933
	Jones, Roy M. (re: U.S. Army Air Corps)	1918–1945
	MacGill, Eileen	1941
	Morgan, Jean (mother; re: Univ. of Texas student life)	1908–1910
	Taylor, T.O.	1911
	Torbert, John Keith	1941

The added subject terms supplement the provenancial information. General subject terms can also be used to augment a subgroup name or series title if the subgroup or series is not refined further. As with the names in the inventory, indexing provides direct access to these subject terms, thus complementing the provenancial access. The processor does not choose between provenancial information and content information but simply places the content information into the context of the provenancial information. This descriptive system lends itself to interactive searching. For example, a user can begin by recalling a particular file via the subject terms and then browse related files grouped nearby via the provenancial arrangement.[13]

Refining the Morgan family papers can be stopped at this point. Additional contents notes can be added to the inventory as users or reference archivists uncover significant topics in the letters. The inventory is structured to accommodate such descriptive expansion.

If processing works level by level with unorganized records, what happens when ordered records are accessioned? The procedures are the same—name the record group, identify the subgroups, establish the series—though the steps to implement the procedures look a little different.

Existing order among accessioned records introduces a new problem: should the processor accept or modify the received order? Answering that question requires an analysis of the received order: is it functional or conventional? A functional order groups related folders together and generally reflects the administrative functions of the record-generating agency. Because it reveals the provenance of the records in an accession, a functional order should be accepted. A conventional order indicates a convention, such as alphabetical or

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[13]Lytle, "Intellectual Access to Archives," pp. 74–75.

1975-81 Old Files Listing—Galveston Historical Foundation

12A 1980 ByLaw Review	36B Texas Historical Commission Grant Applications—1976
12A2 Drafts—ByLaws 1981 Review	
12B 1980 Elections	36C Texas Historical Commission Grant Applications—1977
12C1 1981 Memership Campaign	
15 Development of Permanent Offices	37D CETA Applications 1979–80
	37D2 CETA 1980 City
15B3 Hendley Building—Kresge Foundation—1977	37D3 CETA 1980 County
	38H 1977 General Revenue Sharing Request
15B5 Hendley Building— Fundraising General—1977	145 Galveston Wharves Economic Study
15B6 Hendley Bldg.—THC Grant— 1977	148 Hatteras
15C1 Hendley Building—Design Development—1977	179 National Trust for Historic Preservation
15C2 Hendley Building—Design Implementation—1978	201 Ashton Villa Committee
	202 Dickens Evening Committee
15E1 Bids—1977	204 Education Committee
15E3 Hendley Bldg.—Trentham Contract—1977	205 Finance Committee
36A Texas Historical Commission Grant Applications—1975	209 Research Committee

Figure 4: Container List of Newly Accessioned Corporate Records

numerical order. Because it does not reveal the provenance of the records in an accession, a conventional order needs to be modified. Modification generally requires rearrangement, though in some cases that is impractical and content indexing must be substituted.

How does one determine whether the order is functional or conventional? By working folder by folder and asking the same questions asked before. Figure 4 is the container list that accompanied a recent accession. Whose records are these? The Galveston Historical Foundation's. In what capacity? Most folders were generated in the course of the general administration of the foundation. These are the general series. The last few folders (the 200s) were generated through the work of the named committees. These are the subgroups. What patterns are there? The numeric filing scheme shows the records are arranged in clusters of related folders. These are subseries of the general series of administrative office files.

With the help of some judicious editing, we can see the admnistrative activities clearly outlined in the arrangement (Figure 5). In putting the container list into inventory format, I have taken the liberty of adding a few series titles

Galveston Historical Foundation Records

Folder	General Series	Dates
1–2	Organizational Features	
	ByLaw Reviews (12A)	1980–81
3	Elections (12B)	1980
4	Membership Campaign (12C)	1981
5	Development of Permanent Offices (Administrative Quarters)	
	General (15)	1976–78
6	Hendley Building	
	Funding	
	Kresge Foundation (15B3)	1977
7	General (15B5)	1977
8	Texas Historical Commission Grant (15B6)	1977
9	Design	
	Development (15C1)	1977
10	Implementation (15C2)	1978
11	Construction	
	Bids (15E1)	1977
12	Trentham Contract (15E3)	1977
13–15	Grant Applications	
	Texas Historical Commission (36)	1975–77
16	CETA	
	General (37D)	1979–80
17	City (37D2)	1980
18	County (37D3)	1980
19	General Revenue Sharing (38H)	1977
20	Subject Series	
	Galveston Wharves Economic Study (145)	1979
21	Hatteras (148)	1980–81
22	National Trust for Historic Preservation (179)	1980
	Committee Files (Subgroups)	
23	Ashton Villa Committee (201)	1979–80
24	Dickens Evening Committee (202)	1981
25	Education Committee (204)	1979–80
26	Finance Committee (205)	1980
27	Research Committee (209)	1979–81

Figure 5: Inventory of Corporate Records

(basing the name on the series content) and of controlling the folder headings. These changes are cosmetic and do not alter the original functional order. Since the original folder sequence already shows the administrative origins of the records, there is no need for rearrangement. The folder headings also include a number of useful subject terms that, once again, complement the provenancial access.

Some original functional orders do not conform quite so neatly to the archival ideal. Deviations from the standard are perfectly acceptable so long as the deviations reflect the activities of the creating agency. When the folder sequence reflects only the filing preferences of a records clerk, however, the file order must be altered.

Rearrangement in this setting is not, as Frank Boles characterizes it, a matter of respecting or disrespecting the original order for practical purposes.[14] Rather, it is a matter of adopting an arrangement that clearly shows the provenance of all of the records in the accession. Provenance takes precedence over original order. The sanctity of original order is but a corollary principle that was originally developed for, and is still best applied in, situations where an active records management program ensures a functional original order.[15]

The records of the University of Washington vice provost for academic affairs (Figure 6) present a good example of a conventional order. The folders are in alphabetical order, primarily to facilitate file retrieval. This constitutes enough of a filing system that we could accept the received order and describe the

records as a general administrative series. Yet if this is done we should recognize that processing has stopped at the record group level, not at the series level. None of the folders have yet been inspected to verify that all do indeed belong to the same subgroup and series. The general series designation in this case would be the same as any other tentative identification of the series included in a record group. If we do inspect the folders and analyze their contents we soon see the alphabetical order is but the veneer of a true series. What we really have are several subgroups and subseries of records filed in a single alphabetical sequence. The folders still contain clues to their origin, but those origins are not reflected in the unmodified listing. By examining the folders and rearranging them according to the internal evidence, we can restore the lost provenancial context.[16]

Look at the first few folders in the accession. Whose records are these? The vice provost's. In what capacity? That varies from folder to folder:

Academic Affairs Council
    no capacity; corresp. with another
    univ. office: Interdept. Corresp.
Academic Personnel Office
    no capacity; corresp. with another
    univ. office: Interdept. Corresp.
Academic Planning Council
    member of council; corresp.,
    minutes: APC subgroup
Academic Program Review
    no capacity; misc. materials about
    review: Subject Series
American Bar Association
    no capacity; corresp. with outside
    org.: General Corresp.
Applied Physics Lab
    member of Marine Studies Council;
    corresp. with another univ. office:
    MSC subgroup, General Corresp.

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[14]Frank Boles, "Disrespecting Original Order," *American Archivist*, 45 (Winter 1982): 26–32.
[15]Theodore R. Schellenberg, "European Archival Practices in Arranging Records," *National Archives Staff Information Circular*, No. 5 (Washington, D. C.: National Archives and Records Service, 1939).
[16]Kenneth Munden, "The Identification and Description of the Record Series," *American Archivist*, 13 (July 1950): 213–227, discusses this restoration process in greater detail.

Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

Academic Affairs Council
Academic Personnel Office
Academic Planning Council
Academic Program Review
American Bar Association
Applied Physics Lab
Bakke
Criminal Justice Graduate
    Education
Faculty Council on Community
    Service
Final Examination Policy
Graduate and Professional Student
    Senate
Human Rights Commission

Humanities Council
Kresge Foundation
Marine Studies Council
Minority Faculty Affairs
National Association of University
    and Land Grant Colleges
Operation Crossroads Africa
Post Secondary Education
Proposal to Establish a Chicano
    Counseling Center
Provost
Task Force on Racial Justice
    in Education
Tuition Waiver

Figure 6: Original Order of Vice Provost Records

Were we to continue this process, we would arrive at the arrangement shown in Figure 7. During the rearrangement I again made some cosmetic changes in the folder headings, most notably adding the Washington University prefix to the names of university bodies. Name control is necessary at this stage because the inventory terms will be indexed directly as written in the inventory.

The rearrangement puts the folder headings into provenancial context. It is now clear, for example, that the Applied Physics Laboratory correspondenc deals with Marine Studies Council operations; that the Faculty Council on Community Service folder includes background information only, not the records of that body; and that the vice provost was a member of the Academic Planning Council, but not of the Academic Affairs Council. The provenancial information will help the user choose the folders most likely to contain relevant documents. It seems logical to assume that the more references users must check, the longer their research will take. Yet with clearly

formatted inventories much of the checking is only through inventories, not through actual records. Consistent provenancial description by the archivist can save users much time. Given the sorts of inventories shown here, a user can quickly check many index references to isolate the accessions of interest. Many fewer boxes and folders need to be searched than when the user is presented only with undifferentiated terms, as is the case with container lists.

Moreover, provenancial arrangement gives archivists a better overview of the records in custody. Without systematic subgrouping, holdings can be known only to the accession level, with but a few primary characteristics described in a scope and contents note. As the examples have shown, there are usually also significant bodies of records within accessions. Not only do users need direct access to these, archivists must know of their existence if collection development is to proceed on a rational basis, building upon the strengths of a collection and filling in the gaps.

W.U. Vice Provost for Academic Affairs Records

General Series

General Correspondence
   American Bar Association
   National Association of University and Land Grant Colleges
   Operation Crossroads Africa
   Racial Justice in Education Task Force

Interdepartmental Correspondence
   W.U. Academic Affairs Council
   W.U. Academic Personnel Office
   W.U. Graduate and Professional Student Senate
   W.U. Provost

Subject Series
   Academic Program Review
   Bakke Decision Impact
   Chicano Counseling Center Proposal
   Final Examination Policy
   Minority Faculty Affairs
   Tuition Waiver
   W.U. Faculty Council on Community Service

Subgroups

W.U. Academic Planning Council
W.U. Criminal Justice Graduate Education Program
W.U. Human Rights Commission
W.U. Humanities Council
W.U. Marine Studies Council
   General Correspondence
      Kresge Foundation
      W.U. Applied Physics Lab

Figure 7: Rearranged Order of Vice Provost Records

Rearrangement does take time, but not as much as might be anticipated. Moreover, any time spent is an investment that pays dividends. Provenancial arrangement reduces the descriptive repetition, facilitates weeding or reappraisal of whole series and eliminates duplication of work as portions of the accession are processed in detail. While the benefits of rearrangement may seem minimal in the brief examples shown, with larger accessions the clarity derived from rearrangement greatly improves access and overview. In the long run this clarity saves both user research time and archival reference time.

The examples in this article have covered only the most typical processing situations. Many variations and special cases arise in practice, and it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss them in detail. Regardless of the apparent peculiarities of an accession, the same processing approach should always be followed in order to insure that any arrangement variations reflect the record

generating situation rather than a processor's biases. Because personal and administrative responsiblities overlap, change with time, and fade into one another, record series may overlap, change with time, and fade into one another. To help users understand such ambiguous or confusing situations, the processor may need to add cross-references and short explanatory notes within an inventory. A brief introductory essay, a table of contents, and an inventory index are usually helpful also. Common sense governs the design and application of these additional features.[17] The access points derived from the arrangement—names and topical headings—essentially constitute the rough draft of an inventory. This needs to be edited to assure that the inventory effectively presents the accession information to users.

There are other useful methods of approaching some of the processing situations described above. No system of access is perfect or beyond useful modifications. Readers may note that some of Berner's own views have shifted in the last ten years. For example, he now advocates using the actual file unit headings as subject index terms whenever appropriate; previously he had argued that artificial subject headings applied at the subgroup level would provide sufficient subject access.[18] This particular change in indexing procedures is in part a response to the increased user demand for direct subject access. Because the processing system already presented represents summaries of accessions, only the indexing, not the processing approach, had to change to accommodate users. Such variations in procedural details should not obscure the basic outline of the processing system. Moreover, the shifting nature of user demands only underscores the need for a systematic approach to conveying the information in accessions. There are plenty of useful access points in an accession. By working from the record group level through the subsequent record levels, the archivist can readily provide those access points to users.

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[17]Arthur Breton, "MARAC Finding Aids Awards Committee Chooses Winners, Discusses Conclusions," Society of American Archivists Description Section, Mailing No. 2, 1984, provides the most useful and concise statement on this topic.

[18]Berner and Haller, "Principles of Archival Inventory Construction," pp. 153–154; Richard C. Berner, Arrangement and Description of Manuscripts," *Drexel Library Quarterly*, 11 (January 1975): 34–54.