PACSCL/CLIR "Hidden Collections" Processing Project

Brief Outline of "Archival Boot Camp" Training

Our mandatory centralized training for all our archival processors is one of the most important steps in the minimally processing of the project collections. To date, we have hosted three three-day-long "boot camps." Each time, we learn something new about effective training, and as a result, our program is continually refined to reflect our own observations of what worked and what did not, as well as any suggestions made by project participants.

The first day of boot camp is a structured lecture in an electronic classroom at the University of Pennsylvania. The second and third days are hosted by a repository whose collections will be processed in the next month or two following training. These two days are an opportunity for hands-on experience with time for questions and discussion.

A very brief outline of topics addressed in our training follows. For further details, please contact the project staff.

DAY 1:
  I.   Project basics, mission and goals
  II.   Job description and expectations
  III.   The Archives field
          a. Tools of the Trade (Finding aids, DACS, EAD, MaRC records, and the Archivists' Toolkit
          b. Processing: What is it?
          c. Minimal processing: How does it differ from Traditional Processing? What does it mean in this project?
  IV.   PACSCL/CLIR "Hidden Collections" Processing Project Guide to Processing (5 Steps)
          a. Step 1. Familiarize yourself with the collection
          b. Step 2. Arrange the collection (intellectually, then physically)
          c. Step 3. Describe the collection (write good series/folder titles and notes)
          d. Step 4. Proofread your work
          e. Step 5. Tie up loose ends
  V.   Exercises along the way
          a. Paleography exercise
          b. Folder titling exercise
          c. Identification of material exercise
  VI.   The Archivists' Toolkit
          a. Background of AT
          b. A How-To Overview
          c. Data entry practice with "dummy" collection information

DAY 2:
    I.   Group Processing
        a. Entire training group works together to arrange and describe a collection using our 5 processing steps
    II.   Team Processing
        a. Group is divided into teams of two who begin to process collections "on their own," using the 5 processing steps
        b. Arrange (intellectually, then physically) the collection

DAY 3:
    I.   Team Processing (continued)
        a. Describe the collection in the Archivists' Toolkit
        b. Proofread their work
        c. Tie up loose ends
    II.   Discuss: after all teams have completed their collections, leaving ½ hour to 1 hour for discussion of experience and finding aid critique is helpful, although not always possible due to time constraints.

FOLLOW-UP:
    I.   Finding aids created during training are proofed with the same attention to detail as project finding aids are proofed.
    II.   We often follow training with a debriefing over email that addresses any major concerns or issues we discover in the finding aids in order that processors learn from mistakes.