

VIII. PROCEDURES

Procedures are necessary (and should be required as a matter of policy), in order to assure that the activities of the staff of the software archive are conducted in a fashion which supports larger objectives. Procedures govern each aspect of the archives activity, but this study only addresses those areas where the procedures for the software archives differ from those of the museum or archival repository as a whole; for instance, it discusses qualifications of staff, but not selection procedures, issues relating to media storage, but not maintenance of the facility. Most of the procedures involved in administering a collection of software do not differ from those which would be in place in any library, archive or museum considering establishing such a collection. The correct procedures for any given institution with respect to software collections are those which are consonant with existing policies for other materials and collecting activities. A collection of general purpose forms which serve as samples for the administration of an archival program are available from the Society of American Archivists, as is a "basic manual" on the administration of museum archives and a manual on machine-readable records. Information readily available in these publications is not repeated here.⁴⁷

Procedures are best when they are simple and logical. Unlike the typical in-house procedures manual, this report attempts to identify the rationale for its procedural recommendations. While this approach requires more discussion, it has the benefit of providing staff and management with a basis for adopting or not adopting individual recommendations, or for modifying them to fit the circumstances. Procedures should aim to assure that any information needed by the repository and its users is recorded the first time it is needed, and in a form which will make it useful and available for such future uses. Procedures should be tested under conditions which are as close to real as possible, before they are implemented. Tests should include time measures to be used as baselines for subsequent evaluation of the proce-

⁴⁷ Deiss, William; Museum Archives: An Introduction;
Hedstrom, Margaret L.; Archives & Manuscripts: Machine-Readable Records;
Archival Forms Manual.
All published by the SAA, 600 S. Federal St., Suite 504, Chicago, IL 60605

dures when they have been in place for a time and for improving the procedures at a later date.

A. PROCEDURES GOVERNING ACQUISITION

1. Solicitation

Any procedures for solicitation of materials need to assure that the process is targetted, efficient and produces no misunderstandings.

To assure that the targets are carefully thought out, some procedure should be established for a regular, administrative level, review of the subjects of proposed solicitations. Because collecting software documentation is likely to be only one component of the activity of the repository, decisions made at such a review about the subjects of all active solicitations should be made known to all members of the staff, especially including those not involved in the software archive itself, so that any opportunities for face to face meetings with the subjects, or interests of the subjects known to some staff members, can be taken advantage of.

To assure the efficiency of solicitations, a predefined format for solicitation letters, phone contacts and personal interviews should be developed and followed carefully. Because the terms under which software documentation will be acquired are, potentially, fraught with legal consequences due to the uncertainties surrounding ownership and copyrights discussed earlier, departures from the form should be reviewed by senior staff.

To assure that there will be no misunderstanding, a single point of contact should deal with each potential donor once contact is established and the interests of the repository are explained. Terms of the gifts should be confirmed in writing before a gift agreement is presented for signature. The staff should visit the site where the materials are stored and access what is being offered both to plan for its shipment and to make certain that materials being donated are indeed wanted for the collection. To protect itself legally and ethically, the archives staff should not ever provide or suggest a financial value of the materials being offered to the collection, although they might offer assistance in locating an appraiser. Shipping arrangements should be clearly understood by donors and checked in advance of the date of shipment. When magnetic media are included in a shipment, they must be identified for special handling.

2. Terms of Gifts

In general, deeds of gift should give the archives the right to do with the collection as its needs require. In the rare cases when special terms are necessary, they should be crafted to apply to everyone (except for legal heirs or the staff of an organization) equally. It is strongly recommended that the archive never accept any specific obligations, such as a description or exhibition schedule, with respect to a collection. Any terms requiring special treatment should be cleared with the director and/or the board, both for the protection of the staff, the archive and the donor. Arrangement requiring financial commitments beyond those normally incurred for a collection should always be made contingent upon funding. All departures from standard gift agreements should be filed so that future departures may incorporate the same terms when desired. This reduces the absolute amount of variation and could lead to the adoption of certain terms as part of a standard agreement, if, over time, there is call for it.

3. Accessioning Steps & Forms

Good archival practice dictates that the collections should be accessioned and described physically immediately upon arrival at the archive. Mass preservation activity, such as rewinding of tapes or deacidification of paper, might take place at this time, prior to description. Otherwise, more detailed description will be accompanied by appraisal and routine physical conservation at a later date. In general, materials of different media should not be dispersed until the collection can be described in full since they will contribute to each others appraisal. In collections of software documentation, especially, the existence of multiple formats of the same data may make decisions about what to keep easier; or the presence of materials of one medium may guide the archivist in retaining materials in another medium, as when having software makes keeping paper documentation essential.

B. PROCEDURES GOVERNING COLLECTION MANAGEMENT**1. Conservation**

Practical conservation procedures for the software collection should emphasize proper up front condition documentation and conservation needs assessment. When the materials are received, the physical materials repre-

sented in the collection should be accurately identified and their present condition recorded. The hardware and software dependencies of all machine readable information storage media should be recorded in a way which permits regular, automated, review. The conservation program will then have available information required to determine whether the physical medium needs conservation attention or must be copied to another format either as a result of deterioration or of technical isolation. A "tickling" capability, to alert the staff of required, routine, maintenance, is essentially if any media are maintained in magnetic formats which will require regular attention.

2. Storage

Assuming that the archive takes the traditional approach of maintaining closed stacks, materials should be stored in random locations based upon space available at the time of accessioning. Since it is very likely that many media will be acquired in any given accession, and each will require separate storage conditions, we can expect that logical collections will be physically dispersed. Shelf location information in the online catalog should be restricted to authorized staff.

Open stacks arrangements are possible in archives, but rarely employed. The mixture of media in a software archive will make it extremely difficult to store materials in a logical order on the shelves or to provide the external markings necessary for patrons to browse or for staff to return materials to the shelves and spot misfiles.

3. Retrieval

Assuming the archive will adopt a closed stack environment, retrieval should be closed to staff not immediately responsible for such duties as well as to researchers. This protects the staff from any responsibility for materials which disappear and makes the maintenance of statistics and stack conditions the responsibility of one unit or person. The requirement to retrieve materials in order to consult them for internal reference purposes as well as for outside researchers should be conducted using procedures which will also capture information relevant to evaluation of all aspects of the program. "Call slips" or their equivalent, should be designed to capture not only the dates of the retrieval and what was retrieved, but also information about patrons and their uses of the materials, as well as additional, user suggested indexing terminology.

While the decision will necessarily be made based on available local resources, it will often make sense for a software archive to copy machine readable data onto optical digital disks. Some consideration should be given to the possibility of scanning all archival materials into this format depending upon whether favorable terms can be agreed to for a scanner, thereby reducing retrieval requirements for machine-readable data to an absolute minimum.

C. PROCEDURES GOVERNING ACCESS

1. Reference Procedures

Reference procedures for the software archive need not differ from those of other archival programs. However, the archive should determine its policies on the distribution of single copies of software and implement these in its procedures.

2. Finding Tools

Cataloging procedures will need to be established which satisfy the need to a software archive to have integrated access to all of its holdings without respect to the form of material being described. The only acceptable framework for such cataloging is the MARC-AMC format rather than the specialized formats for machine readable data, audio-visuals, and published texts. If possible, reports on holdings should also be contributed to a national bibliographic network (OCLC, RLIN or WLN). A case can be made for a specialized national union list for software and related documentation, similar in some respects to the National Union Catalog of Microfilm Masters or the National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections.

3. Reading room use

Reading room procedures for the software archive do not differ from those of other archives except that if PC's or printers are provided or permitted, users should be prevented from copying software code. Disc duplication and print output directed to the reference desk will probably serve as a sufficient control.

4. Loans

Any given record from the software archive, as in most archives, is likely to be in low demand. The software archive can, therefore, consider proce-

dures for the loan of collections (and parts of collections) to other repositories where the materials can be used under the supervision of another archivist. A procedure which recovered the costs of making a digital image of materials to send would have the benefit of making future loans of the same materials easier.

5. Copying Procedures

Legal restrictions on software copying are no more stringent than that on other forms of copyright, but the archive should explicitly inform users that possession of a legal copy made under the research fair use provisions does not give them the right to make additional copies or permit them to use copies which have been legally made for research, for the software's original, intended, application. Users will not generally understand or appreciate these restrictions on software even if they are familiar with copyright restrictions on other materials.

D. STAFF

1. Regular Staff

Of the various staff positions which might be important to a software collection program, only that of the curator/archivist of software needs to be specific to this function.

The position should require:

- * An advanced degree in library or information science, the history of science or technology, or museology
- * Experience in archives, archival automation and management of machine-readable records

Selective factors would include:

- * Knowledge of museums and the role of archives in museums
- * Appreciation of the nature of disciplinary history centers
- * Knowledge of the nature and history of software
- * Experience in managing multi-organizational networks.

In order to attract reasonable candidates, it would be useful to post announcements of the availability of the job both in the Newsletter of the Society of American Archivists and SPECTRA, the Newsletter of the Museum Computer Network

2. Affiliates

A program which encourages serious researchers to spend substantial time at the archive conducting their research is of benefit both to the archives and scholars. Procedures for "affiliated" researchers, whether on sabbatical from large computer firms which have such leaves or on fellowship from universities, should be established. Such affiliations need not carry any responsibilities or rewards, but should be reviewed by a committee imbued with some prestige.