Appendix C

Processing Manual for Mote Library and Archives: A Guide for Staff and Volunteers

Processing of archival collections at Mote Library is done based on the overarching principle of ***provenance***. Provenance refers to the origins of the materials and is the most important thing to keep in mind when working with archival records. Before taking any action, ask yourself if it violates the principle of provenance.

> Provenance refers to the origin or source of an item, and to information regarding the origins, custody, and ownership of an item or collection. Provenance is a fundamental principle of archives, referring to the individual, family, or organization that created or received the items in a collection. The principle of provenance or the *respect des fonds* dictates that records of different origins (provenance) be kept separate to preserve their context.
> - *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology* by Richard Pearce-Moses. http://www.archivists.org/glossary/index.asp.

Mote Library follows the principle of provenance above all else. Mote Library sometimes follows original order, when possible. It may be preferable to maintain the original order of the records because this order may reflect the organic creation of the records, and the way they were arranged might show how they were used by the previous holders of the collection. When maintaining original order is not possible, an order may be imposed that still respects the source of the records (*respe des fonds*) and is useful to researchers.

The goal of processing is to obtain physical and intellectual control over a collection by arranging and describing the records in a way that is useful to researchers and most reflective of the true nature of the records. Arrangement and description of archival records should reflect nationally recognized standards and best practices. For more information, please refer to the publications listed in Appendix E, References.

Description of archival records and special collections most often takes the form of a **finding aid**. Finding aids serve a similar function to catalog records, only in greater detail and with a greater adaptation to the unique nature of the collection. Finding aids help researchers locate items and help staff maintain intellectual and physical control over a collection. Finding aids describe to researchers and staff the physical location and the arrangement put in place. Finding aids reflect the creation of the records but also allow researchers to search by topic, year, subject, and more. Smaller institutions may have simple paper and/or searchable PDF finding aids in addition to a catalog record for their archival collections. Many online finding aids now appear in EAD, Encoded Archival Description.

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Processing at Mote Library & Archives adheres to the five levels of arrangement developed by Oliver Wendell Holmes[1]. The five levels are listed below with an example from the Charles M. Breder Jr. Collection:

Repository: Mote Marine Laboratory Library
Record Group: Charles M. Breder Jr. Collection
Series:
1. Journals and Logbooks
2. Drawings and Papers
3. Photographs
4. Correspondence

File unit: Correspondence, 1939
Item: Letter from Charles M. Breder Jr. to the American Museum of Natural History, dated January 1, 1939.

For example, a box of unprocessed Breder correspondence from 1939 may have folders dedicated to different organizations like all of Breder's correspondence with the AMNH, which would lend itself to an alphabetical arrangement, however if the files are mixed correspondence, it is better to sort them by date and have a chronological arrangement. While there are many ways to arrange file folders (alphabetical, chronological, geographical, subject, numerical) Mote's collections are arranged primarily alphabetically and/or chronologically.

It is sometimes necessary to separate related materials physically, but it is important to keep them together intellectually. For example, if photographs and documents were in the same file, photographs should be stored separately when possible, but the original connection between the documents and photos should be maintained by notation in the finding aid and on the file enclosures themselves.

At no point should processing be done 'blind,' i.e. without any prior knowledge of the collection and its contents. Prior to processing a collection, a complete inventory of the contents of the collection should exist. If one does exist, you should still go through the collection prior to processing to familiarize yourself with the contents and be better able to make informed decisions. If an inventory does not exist, create one. With an inventory, a general processing plan should emerge and the arrangement of the records should be evident. At no time should processing violate provenance. For example, do not create a series on flying fish containing articles from the Mina Walther collection on flying fish and add to it Dr. Breder's papers on flying fish. This harms the integrity of the records and is not helpful to researchers.

Finding aids should incorporate the following information:
- Location of items
- Source of items
- Description of contents

[1] Not the U.S. Supreme Court Justice.

Specifically, the information contained in the following fields should somehow be represented.

- Description and/or Abstract- collection overview
- Scope and Content Note- extent of collection and what it contains
- Types of material- formats, e.g. photos, journals
- Inclusive dates, use all 4 digits- xxxx-xxxx (also xxxx, xxxx)
- Divisions (series)-outline for finding aid- basic areas within collection
- Biographical and/or Historical Note- context of family, person, etc. that the collection comes from, how collection was acquired
- Subjects- keywords, research topics
- Container list- folder level, if known

It is important that records be housed safely, in appropriate enclosures. When processing here at Mote, rehouse if necessary in archival boxes and folders. Do not overfill or underfill boxes, and use crumpled paper to fill the remainder of a box so that folders stand straight without being crammed. Use size adjustments on folders so items fit comfortably in folders. Do not overfill folders. If transferring from a non-archival folder, note the title of the prior folder on a piece of paper and plastiklip it to the new archival folder until you are ready to label the archival folders. This will help keep track of changes.

When relabelling folders, include the folder title, date, and finding aid reference in the right corner. Note any significant subjects and related materials in the center of the tab, and note the collection, series, box, and folder number on the left. Items within folders should be arranged by date, with the most recent first. Folders within boxes should be arranged alphabetically, then chronologically. Folder headings should accurately reflect the contents of the folders and the type of record and subject.

For example,
CMB1, Box 2, Folder 3. A shorthand approach for in house references can be CMB1.2.3. It is important to include all of the information. Series 1, Box 2, folder 3 could be any collection, and likewise, box numbers restart at each new series and folders in each new box. All elements are important if you want to be able to actually locate an item. CB 1 refers to a card box, usually 3 x 5 or 4 x 6 in. and normally houses index cards or photographs. Box 1 refers to the standard document cases, flip top, which will be either legal or letter sized. OB 1 refers to Oversized Box. If you have card boxes or oversized boxes within a series, number them within the series, but not in sequence with different box types. For example, CMB series 2 may include Box 1, Box 2, and then Oversized Box 1, and Card Box 1. See Bass Lab series 1A.5 for example.

Cleaning and Rehousing

As you rehouse items, carefully brush them clean with new, dry paintbrush or other horsehair type brush to remove dirt and insect residue if the items are dirty. Pay attention to creases and the location of old paperclips that may have rusted. Do not put dirty items into new archival boxes and folders. If you need to process a collection but are not ready to rehouse, use regular file folders to sort and arrange with temporary labels until you are ready to clean and rehouse. When rehousing, remove whatever paperclips, staples, rubber bands, etc. that you can without harming

the item. If you cannot remove a fastener without damaging the item, leave it or refer it to an archivist.

Keep notes as you work with any collection, and do not attempt to make changes throughout the process that you cannot trace back. Once connecting information is lost, it may be difficult to recapture the relationships between records, even if you are creating new headings or even a new order.

For non-paper formats, make sure the enclosure is appropriate. For example, some biologically based materials cannot be stored in buffered materials. Buffered enclosures have calcium carbonate at 3.3% to counteract the natural decay of most papers. Exceptions to buffered housing are silk, vellum, cyanotypes, blueprints, etc. Unbuffered materials are PH neutral and will not interact with biological agents. If buffered enclosures are the only ones available, line the enclosure with plain copy paper or unbuffered tissue and house the item as normal. If unsure of what type of enclosure to use, consult an archivist. Plastic aprons and masks or respirators are available to work with dirty materials. If you are unsure of an action, get assistance from archivist or Library Director.

DO

- Wear white cotton gloves when handling archival materials.
- Have necessary supplies ready prior to beginning work.
- Keep notes as you work.
- Make an inventory.
- Use pencil for all work.
- Keep track of changes you make.
- Skim material as you work for later description.

DON’T

- Violate Provenance.
- Co-mingle records.
- Eat or drink while processing.
- Use pen, post-it notes, metal paperclips, or staples.
- Overfill folders or boxes.
- Put dirty or moldy records in clean boxes.
- Take records home or leave them somewhere unsafe.