

Observations on Scholarly Engagement with Hidden Special Collections and Archives

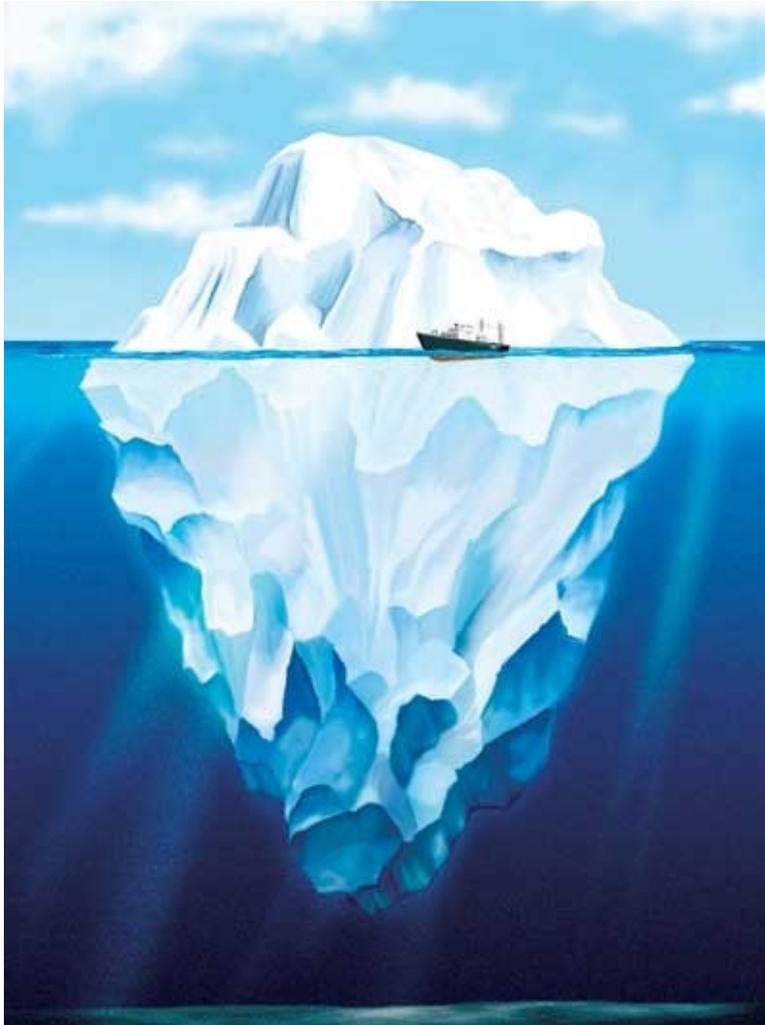
Council on Library and Information Resources
Hidden Collections Program Symposium
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Study Team

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The Iceberg and the Dinner Fork

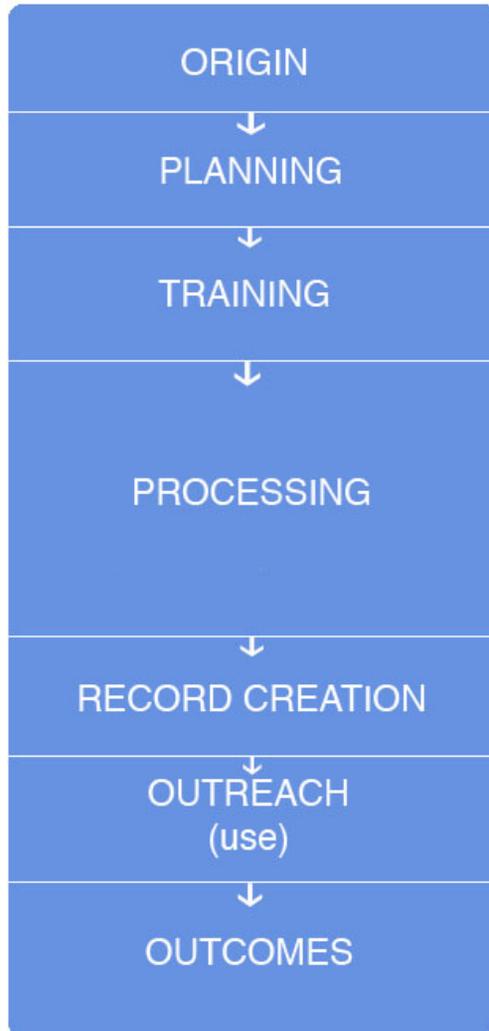


Methodology

- conducted online survey (April – May 2009)
- led a seminar at the 2009 RBMS Preconference (June 2009)
- conducted one-day site visits (August 2009 – February 2010)
- drafted final report including extensive bibliography (March 2010)

Scholarly Engagement

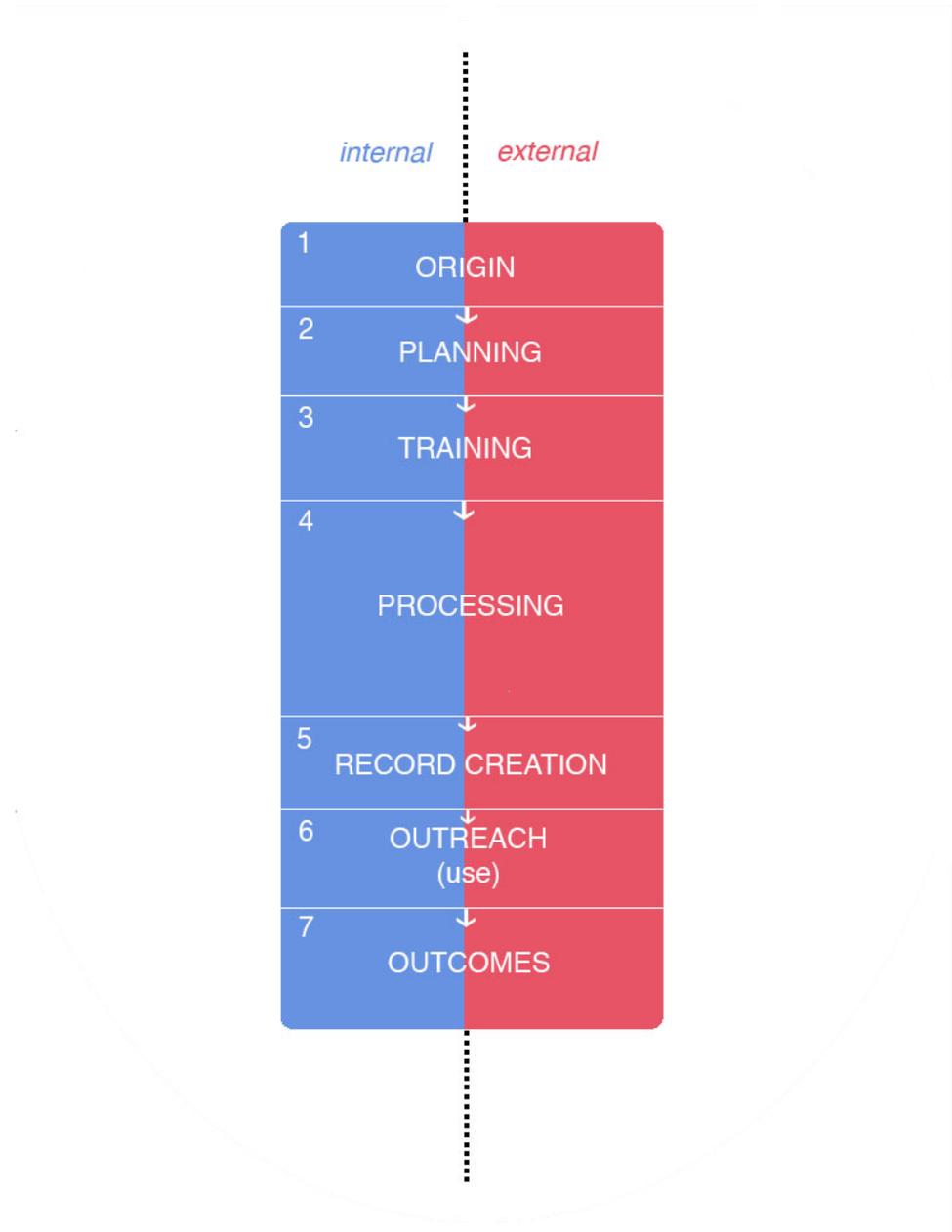
interaction with collections that results in
the creation of new knowledge



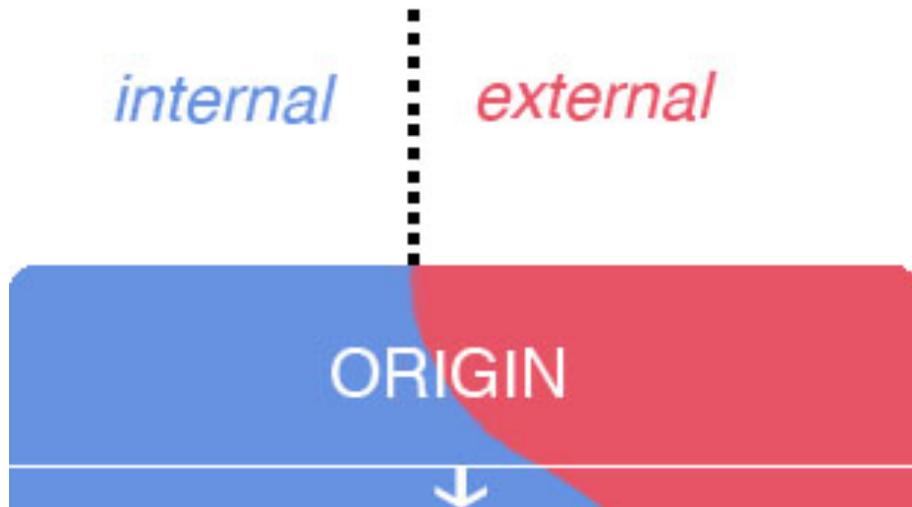
Project Lifecycle

Modes of Scholarly Engagement

internal
&
external



Stage 1: Project Origin



- **Creation**
- **Acquisition**
- **Selection**
- **Preliminary Use**
- **Assessment of Research Value**

Stage 2: Planning



- **Letters of Support**
- **Fundraising**

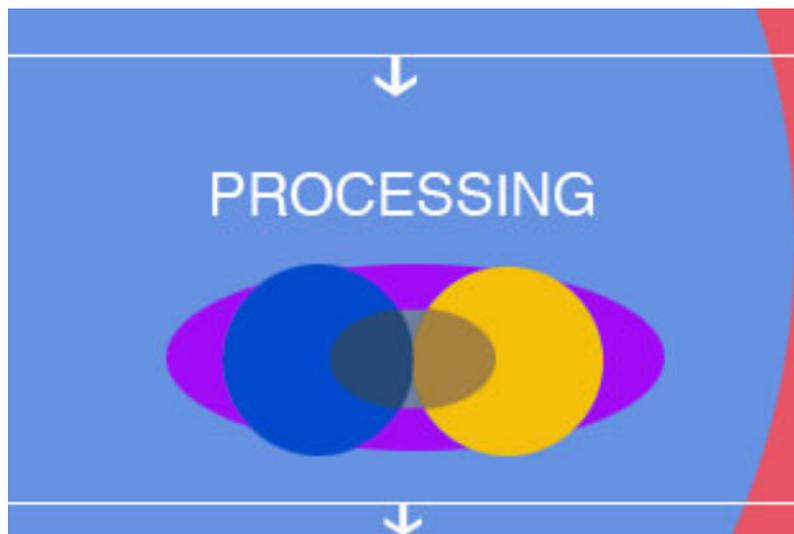
Stage 3: Training



- **Project Staff Selection**
- **Subject Area Orientation**

Q. Does subject expertise of project staff help or hinder the processing and cataloging of collections? Are there effective training models that leverage both subject expertise and the professional training of archivists and librarians?

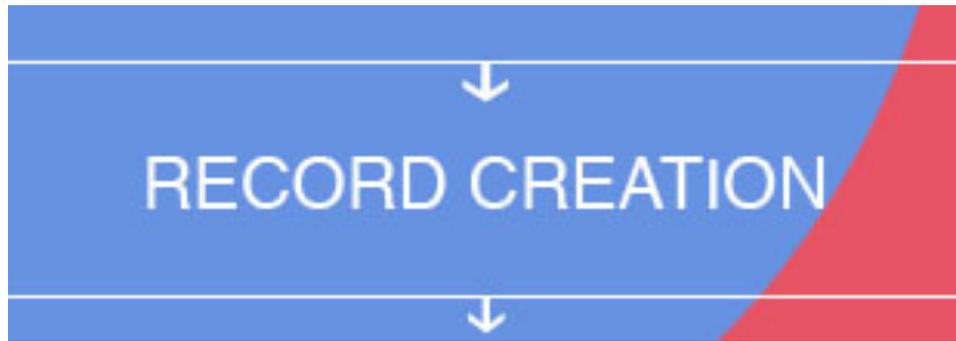
Stage 4: Processing



- **Access to Semi-Processed Collections**
- Instruction & Reference for Project Staff

Q. Is it helpful for outside scholars to be “on call” for processing staff?

Stage 5: Record Creation

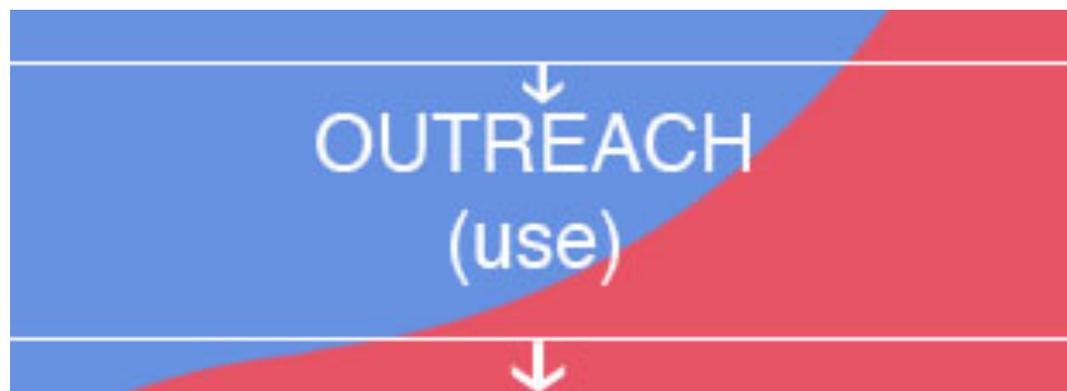


- Review and Evaluation of Finding Aids

Q. Is it helpful for scholars to review and evaluate finding aids prior to publishing?

Stage 6: Outreach Mechanisms

- print publications
- tours
- **lectures**
- **seminars***
- **symposia***
- exhibits
- **fellowships***
- conference presentations
- websites
- e-newsletters
- blogs
- pages on social networking sites (Facebook)*
- wikis*
- online exhibits
- awards for undergraduate use of collections*
- linking online finding aids to online research guides, exhibits, publications, etc.
- allowing user tags on finding aids*



Stage 7: Internal Outcomes

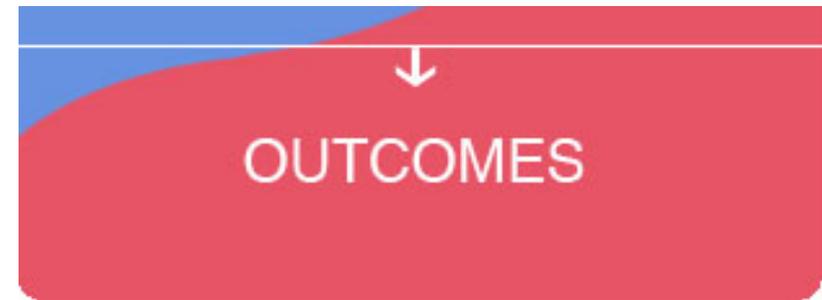
- clearer measures of productivity and costs
- improved workflows
- improved coordination between separate units or divisions within the library/archive
- professional development for staff
- expression of relationships between items in collections
- linking of related databases and digital projects, of materials in different formats, and of collections across institutions.
- better understanding of MPLP effects on users
- identification of better standards for cataloging ephemera, maps, and posters
- identification of mechanisms for users to add description to finding aids (Web 2.0 tools)
- determination of sustainable future for the collections
- determination of sustainable funding for resulting digital projects

Stage 7: External Outcomes



- increased visibility of the targeted collections
- increased use of targeted collections, finding aids
- increased reference contacts and requests
- creation of new communities of creators, processors, and users of collections
- use of social-networking technologies to enhance research practices
- contributions to digital encyclopedias, sponsored by the state or region
- new publications, artwork and community projects
- increased undergraduate class use
- new partnerships with related libraries and museums
- new opportunities for fundraising and collection development

User Assessment Practices and Tools



- use statistics: user counts
- user registration tools (registration form to interview)
- user surveys
- user focus groups
- records of publications and media productions resulting from use
- paper and electronic forms for users to suggest changes to finding aids
- applying Google Analytics to finding aids
- files of informal “thank you” letters or e-mails from users
- word-of-mouth
- Archival Metrics <http://archivalmetrics.org>

Goals of Collecting Usage Data

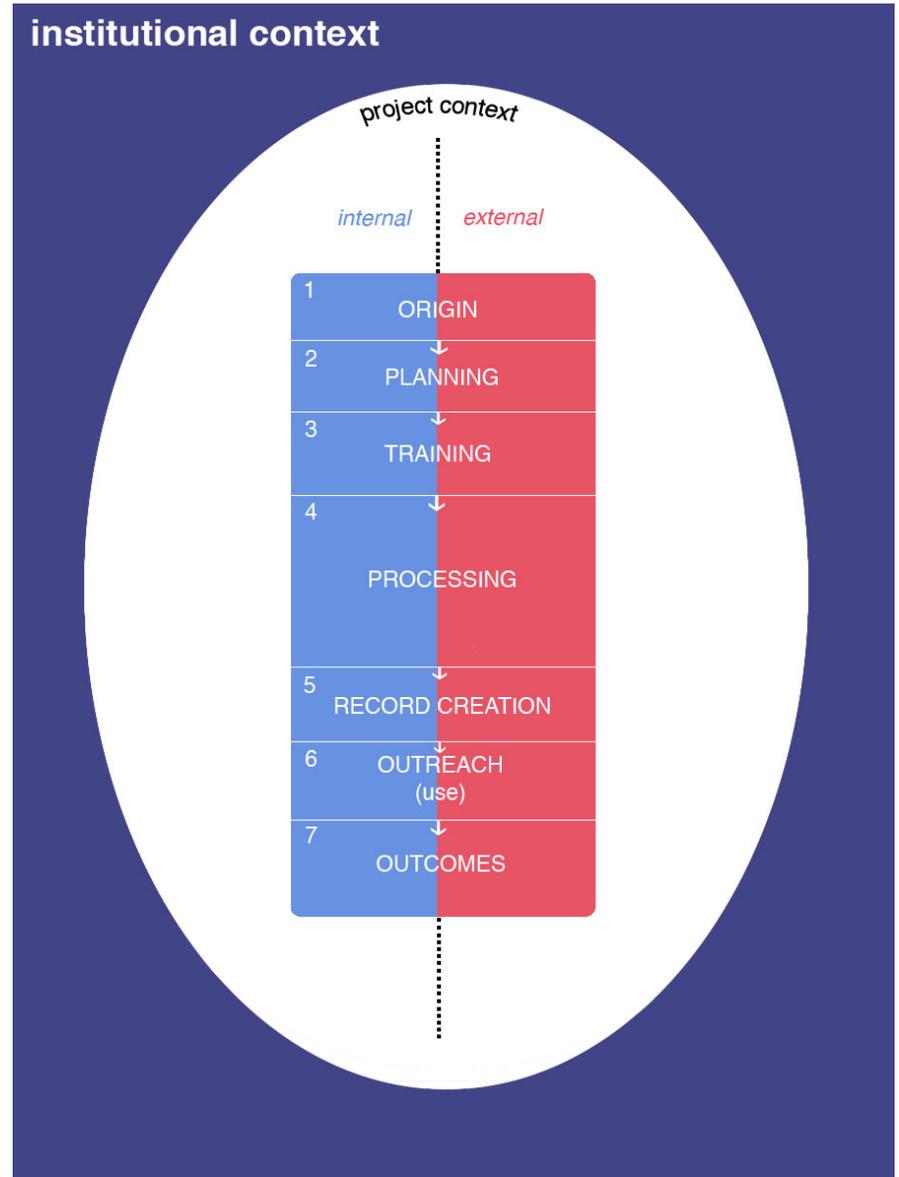
- to understand user communities more fully
- to inform future collection development priorities
- to create strategic plans
- to write annual reports
- to make internal justifications for increased staffing or resources
- to make justifications for support to donors and granting agencies

Institutional Contexts

Factors:

Type
Location
Space and Facilities
Missions and Priorities
Leadership models
Organizational structures
Staffing models
Services for Users
Users
Technology and technical support
Outreach models

All of these affect what kinds of engagement are possible



Q: What would a consortium of Hidden Collections projects look like? How would it function to enhance project capacities and results?

Recommendations for special collections libraries/archives

- View scholars, especially emerging scholars, as largely untapped labor pool
- Look for opportunities for scholarly engagement during *all* stages of the project lifecycle
- Experiment with *team* processing approaches
- Document ideas for outreach *as processing occurs*
- Track usage data and share publicly
- Track outcome data and share publicly
- Look for outreach mechanisms with opportunities for two-way information exchange
- Create opportunities for structured engagement between archivists/catalogers/processors and practitioners of digital scholarship and research

Q: What if physical collections were cataloged with awareness of -- or in anticipation of -- the speculative imaginings of scholars and technologists about future online libraries and archives?



San Mateo, California. Bailing out a life boat at a United States Merchant Marine Cadet basic school. Farm Security Administration - Office of War Information Photograph Collection. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

Recommendations for CLIR

- Network the project archivists
- Consider recommendations for future digitization of the collections
- Consider recommendations for *ongoing* cataloging of hidden collections

Questions

1. Do the study's observations or recommendations seem relevant to your institution? Why, or why not?
2. How might CLIR and the Hidden Collections community take action to address the recommendations of the report?
3. Are there other issues you would recommend CLIR and the team consider addressing in these studies?

Scholarly engagement practices observed in 2008 HC projects

