

# Overcoming Project Hurdles

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## Session Overview

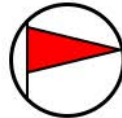
- Part 1: Materiality
  - Risks in Context and Scenario Discussion
  - Policy as Prevention
  - Risks and Problem Materials
  - Scenario Review
- Part 2: Content
  - Intro: Ethics
  - Scenario Discussions
    - Dealing with the Past
    - Collecting in the Now
    - Access to Offensive Materials
    - Community Archives Project
  - Q&A and Wrap-up

This session is being presented in two parts. Part one addresses the risks to and from collections materials and strategies for dealing with these risks, while part 2 will address risks related to the content of collections and strategies for working through ethical issues.



# Approaches to Identifying and Managing Collection Red Flags





## Part 1: Materiality – Jessica Bitely



Hello everyone, and welcome to the first part of Overcoming Project Hurdles. This 45 minute section will address red flags within our collections as they relate to the makeup of collection objects.



## Materiality Scope

-  Risks in Context, Scenario-based Activity [15 min.]
-  Policy is Prevention [10 min.]
-  Risky Business: Mold, Pests, & Problem Materials [10 min.]
-  Scenario Review & Discussion [10 min.]

Over the course of this session, we'll identify the risks **to** our collections and the risks **from** our collections, as well as some of the activities and actions that can mitigate those risks.

To get us started in our thinking, I'm going to introduce some of the broad risks (or hazards) related to collections care. I've developed a scenario based upon situations and collections that I've seen during the course of my work. You should have received this scenario prior to the webinar; however, you can also find it in the files listed here in AdobeConnect. After the scenario discussion, we'll review some of the ways in which our policies (or lack thereof) affect our ability to reduce risk. We'll then delve more deeply into a few specific, common hazards that affect the long-term viability of our materials and also pose human health concerns.

We'll wrap up by revisiting the scenario and discussing priority actions before moving on to Part 2.

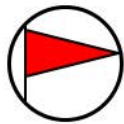


# Materiality, Risk and Context

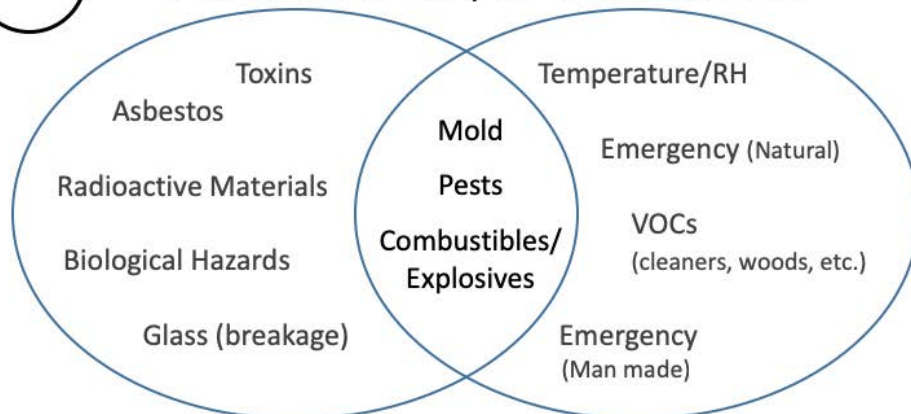
You've probably figured out that my focus throughout this session will be on materiality. This is somewhat different from the way in which we typically consider collections. We're generally very comfortable thinking about the intellectual content of our collections. It takes a mental switch for information professionals to look NOT at what an object means or contains, but at what it IS. The medium rather than the message.

For example, while you may look at a book and say 'Well, this is a first edition copy of Alice in Wonderland signed by Lewis Carroll with marginalia in the hand of the original owner', from a materiality perspective, what we also want to be saying to ourselves is "Here we have a volume with a gilt stamped red cloth cover, a cotton rag textblock, and at least three types of ink.'

Understanding the object as an object, often made of multiple materials (or what we would call a 'composite object'), puts us on the path to identifying the hazards TO that object (and objects of its type) and also the hazards we might face FROM that type of object. Identifying the riskiest risks from a materiality standpoint informs our prioritization for further action.



## Hazards from/to Collections



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In the time allotted, it would be impossible to cover all of the potential risks to and from collections materials, and there are a multitude of resources available to deeply explore particular issues. Many of these can be found on the wiki associated with this series.

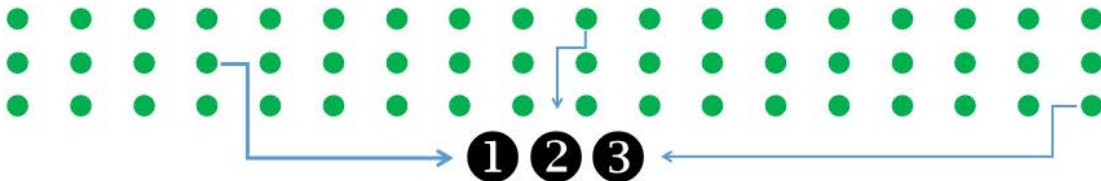
For now, I just want to emphasize that a variety of factors pose a risk to the longevity of our collections. Likewise, a variety of factors pose a risk to anyone using the collections. The risks we face from collections may be inherent from creation (for example: nitrate film) or they may be accrued over time (for example: arsenic applied as a pesticide for taxidermied animals.)

It's also important to note that hazards TO collections can exacerbate hazards FROM collections. We're going to spend some more time later discussing mold, pests, and combustibles/explosives. These three areas pose risks to health and safety, and simultaneously pose significant risks to the longevity of collections items.



## Your Objective: Identify Hazards

- Thinking about the Swingate Public Library:
  - List as many risks **to people** from the collections as you see
  - List as many risks **to the collections** as you see
  - From your list, identify 1 thing in each area that is of particular concern & why



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To get us started in thinking about risks, let's spend some time with the Swingate Public Library scenario. We're going to move into the discussion room to whiteboard some responses to a few questions about this scenario. For a refresher, we will be putting the scenario on the screen for 60 seconds, but again, the document is available in the files area on the webinar screen.

You will have 2 minutes per question.



## Your Objective: Identify Hazards

- The group spent two minutes on each of the following:
  - List as many risks **to people** from the collections as you see
  - List as many risks **to the collections** as you see
  - From your list, identify 1 thing in each area that is of particular concern & why

A complete transcript of Chat 1, Swingate Public Library, can be downloaded on the webinar's home page found in the text below.

To get us started in thinking about risks, let's spend some time with the Swingate Public Library scenario. We're going to move into the discussion room to whiteboard some responses to a few questions about this scenario. For a refresher, we will be putting the scenario on the screen for 60 seconds, but again, the document is available in the files area on the webinar screen.

You will have 2 minutes per question.





# Policy is Prevention

(Now and Later)

I know almost no one really loves to spend time thinking about, much less writing, documentation but carefully considered and consistently enacted written policy can be the most effective tool to limit your physical risk from collections while also limiting legal, financial, and reputational risks.

In this section we are going to talk more about mission, collection development policy, deeds of gift, and inventories and how each of these intersects.



## The Mission

- Who are you doing your work for?
- What is the broad purpose of your work?
- How does your work support your designated community?
- If you are in a larger organization, how do you fit within the institutional mission?



Your mission frames your overall work. It articulates your purpose. Whether you have a mission already or not, ask yourself the following questions:

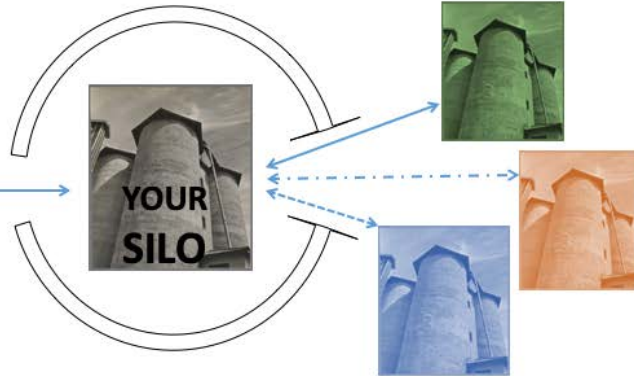
- 1) Who am I doing this work for? Establishing audience can be difficult, but understanding who you're actually doing your work for will help you make decisions down the line about what to collect, what to keep, and what to remove. In archival terms, we talk about understanding our 'designated community' – that group of primary users that our materials support. For collections in a research university, this may mean faculty and students. For a local historical society, this may mean the residents of the town. Identify your primary users, but also consider secondary (or desired!) users as well.
- 2) What is the broad purpose of this work? With historic collections, this will often be collecting, maintenance (for as long as needed) and access.
- 3) How does my work with these collections support my designated community? For example, a research university may wish to emphasize teaching and learning with primary sources.
- 4) Finally, even if you're a part of a larger organization, establishing a discrete mission for your collecting functions is worth considering but it must be considered within the context of the larger organization. How does your collecting function support the wider organizational mission?

[HAVE PARTICIPANTS CONSIDER THEIR RESPONSE TO THE POLL – for example, if a public library, did they say yes because the library has a mission or because their local history collection has a mission statement separate from but supportive of the library’s overall mission?]



## The Collection Development Policy

- Content Areas
- Formats
- Languages
- Geographic Scope
- Temporal Scope
- Areas of Strength
- Areas of Focus
- Gifts Statement
- Maintenance Policies
- (Related Materials)



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Your mission provides your touchstone, but your collection development policy clarifies your scope, defines the shape of your collection, and makes your decision process transparent. Some of the aspects of collecting that may be included in your policy include content areas, formats, languages, geographic scope, temporal scope, content areas where you have strong existing collections, content areas that you would like to focus on collecting in, a statement about gifts to the organization, collection maintenance information, and related materials held by other institutions.

Your collection development policy is a tool to help you ensure responsible future collecting. It tells your researchers who you are, but it also tells staff who you are even in the event of personnel changes. I'm sure some of you have come into a situation where you really REALLY wish that previous staff had documented their decisions. This is your chance to help the future (and avoid having your name taken in vain!)

While the policy defines who you are, maybe the most important thing it does is that it allows you to define who you **aren't** (and to explain why!). For example, you may choose not to take on audiovisual materials because the maintenance requirements are beyond your capabilities and because you have no equipment to provide reasonable access.

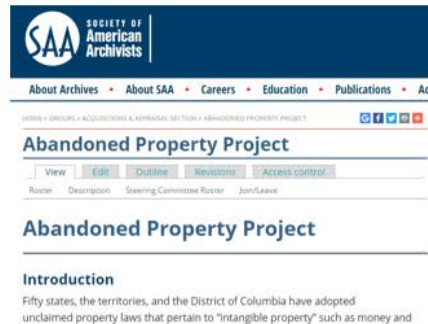
When defining your collection, it can be helpful to understand the scope of other collecting organizations that are nearby or that have a similar focus. Knowing who else is collecting in a similar area helps in identifying gaps and gluts. Honing the scope of collecting allows us to focus on those materials that are most relevant and most appropriate to our resources and abilities. For example, in Massachusetts, NEDCC is part of a Town-Wide Assessment program. I went to a town in western MA recently where the public library and the historical society already had close ties and realized that they could easily become competitors for materials. The public library is in a brand new, climate controlled building with full-time staffing, while the historical society is in a historic firehouse that has been refurbished in only the most limited way and they rely on volunteers who come by for about an hour each week. The Library and the HS came to an agreement that the library would focus on collecting paper-based materials and become the research hub, while the historical society would focus on less environmentally sensitive 3 dimensional objects and become the community hub. For them, this serves to both improve access for researchers and to improve the preservation outlook of collections.



## The Deed of Gift

- Ideal: you have one!
  - with names of donor/recipient; description of materials; transfer of ownership; access statement; transfer of rights; disposition statement; and signatures
- Next best thing is documentation of:
  - 1) an offer;
  - 2) an acceptance; and
  - 3) transfer of property

- No Documents? ~~No Problem!~~



The screenshot shows the Society of American Archivists (SAA) website. The header includes the SAA logo and navigation links: About Archives, About SAA, Careers, Education, Publications, and Adv. Below the header, there are social media icons and a breadcrumb trail: Home > Groups > Acquisitions & Appraisal Section > Abandoned Property Project. The main heading is "Abandoned Property Project" with sub-headings for "View", "Edit", "Outline", "Revisions", and "Access control". Below this, there are names: Roscoe, Desrosiers, Stearns, Cozzitelli, Roscoe, and Jani/Leave. Another heading "Abandoned Property Project" is visible, followed by an "Introduction" section. The introduction text states: "Fifty states, the territories, and the District of Columbia have adopted unclaimed property laws that pertain to 'intangible property' such as money and

So, you've framed your work within your mission and prepared a collection development policy to define your scope. Now, when someone offers your materials, you need to have some method of both enforcing your scope and documenting the transfer of property. The Deed of Gift – which might also be called a donation form, a gift form, a donor agreement, or a gift agreement – does this for you. Essentially, this is a document outlining your rights to the materials being offered AS WELL as your responsibilities as they relate to those materials. In addition, the routine use of a deed of gift form allows you to review whether offered materials fit within your collecting policy and don't pose any hazards to people or to your existing collections. This is a chance to slow down and make a decision about the appropriate disposition of the materials BEFORE they've made it into your collection. It also limits your legal and financial risk over time.

Ideally, you already have a deed of gift and it includes the names of the donor and the recipient, a description of the materials, a statement of transfer of ownership, a statement about access/restrictions, a statement about the transfer of rights, a statement about your disposition process and rights, and signatures of the involved parties. The SAA Anatomy of a deed of gift:

<http://www2.archivists.org/publications/brochures/deeds-of-gift> is available on the

wiki, along with a number of other related resources.

If you don't have a deed of gift for a collection, the next best thing is that you have some kind of documentation saying basically 'hey, I want to give you this thing!' to which you reply 'Whoa! Cool! I will totally take that thing.' and then once you have it in your possession you say 'Man, thanks for giving me this thing!'

Barring all of that, things get trickier. You can contact the donor or their family to see what might be possible, but if you can't find anyone to contact you're going to have to move into research of your state's abandoned property laws. SAA's Abandoned Property Project is a great place to get started, but not all states have this type of law and some states don't specifically address the needs of libraries/archives/museums. The New England Museum Association has a really wonderful article about abandoned property and potential workflows. It can be found on the wiki. And of course, if you can, seek legal advice.

While we're here I want to quickly mention copyright, although the topic is too big for us to delve deeply into today. There are a multitude of materials on the wiki about copyright to help you but just try to keep in mind that someone saying they own the rights to something doesn't mean they do.

GOOD RESOURCE: <http://www.nemanet.org/nemn/summer-2016/abandoned-property/#>

GOOD RESOURCE: <http://www2.archivists.org/groups/acquisitions-appraisal-section/abandoned-property-project>



## The Key: Intellectual Control

- Know what's in your collection, and be aware of:

Firearms/Munitions	Biological specimens	Textiles
Anthropological materials	Ethnographic materials	Archaeological materials
Moldy stuff	Taxidermy	Nitrate film
Glass	Acetate film	Medical supplies
Veterinary Supplies	Dental supplies	

**AND THERE'S MORE!** (Miscellaneous objects produced with lead, arsenic, radium, uranium, mercury, toxins, pesticides, fumigants, etc. etc. etc. etc.)

The foundational policy document for collecting (or collections holding!) organizations is the collection development policy. Depending upon the size and scope of your organization, this may even be split into multiple separate policies. These stem from your guiding mission, and inform your deed of gift agreement.

Ultimately, though, any policy or documentation relies on some degree of intellectual control over all materials in the collection. This means you know (at least broadly) what types of materials you have, what their content is, how much of it you have, and then also that you can find specific items with relative ease.

I come to this from an archival perspective where we often describe in aggregate. This approach can be very dissimilar to libraries and museums, but if you're starting from 0 or have large amounts of unprocessed material, it can be a good first sweep. As you work on your project planning, having a broad sense of your collections, their value, and the formats and risks represented will help you prioritize activities (think back to the first webinar in this series! All of your project planning relies on knowing what's going on in your collections. Likewise, thinking about the Collection Access session – cataloging can provide an impetus for inventorying, and vice versa).



This list of hazards can help you get started in understanding where risks might lie. Developing an awareness of your collections and potential risks to and from them can point you towards the most fruitful areas to explore for immediate action. For example, you have two taxidermied birds and 1000 nitrate negatives? Start with exploring what to do with those negatives! And get yourself a disaster plan for collections!

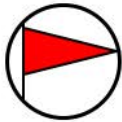
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES on wiki, also Material Safety Data Sheets for chemicals, chemical compounds and chemical mixtures.



# Risky Business

## Mold, Pests and Problem Materials

As I mentioned at the beginning, we are going to go a bit more deeply into a small set of risks that represent a hazard not only to human health but also to the longevity of your collections. These include mold, pests and combustible or explosive materials.



## Prevention Strategies

- Maintain building envelope!
- Monitor storage environment!
- Identify potential problem areas
- Identify risks to/from materials
  - Bring in fire department
  - Clearly label boxes and discovery guides
- Explore mitigation techniques and alternate storage options, both macro and micro



I want to start by addressing some basic prevention strategies. These largely have to do with environmental risks because many issues can be mediated by careful environmental control – mold can be prevented, pest activity can be reduced, and chemical degradation can be slowed.

Your building is the first line of defense for your collections. Maintenance of the building envelope should always be a priority. Addressing maintenance issues in a timely manner saves money and reduces risks of disasters as well as risks from mold and pests. At minimum, doing a walkthrough of your structure from basement to roof and identifying potential problem areas will help you identify short and long term goals for mitigation. Inspect your roof and gutters and clean them regularly to forestall leaks. Take note of areas of past water infiltration. Keep an internal log of maintenance issues over time so that you can identify recurrent problems and more effectively advocate for repairs.

Use the building walkthrough to do a thorough review of your collection storage areas. Look for dampness and stagnant air pockets. Take note of heating and cooling sources and air vents. Determine whether any collection materials are stored along outer walls or near windows. Consider what's above and adjacent to collections storage:

bathrooms, water pipes, kitchens and the like can be sources of water infiltration.

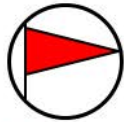
Monitor your storage environment. Even if you have an HVAC that monitors and has reporting functions, it's wise to do independent monitoring as well. There are two main reasons: first, HVAC monitors are not recording what's going on in the actual stacks. They record at a certain point, usually near the vents. This is not always representative of actual collections conditions. Secondly, independent monitoring over time gives you a better sense of collections conditions AND arms you with empirical data to advocate for improvements.

If you have the resources and are able to invest the time in learning to use and analyze datalogger information, this provides a robust view of collections conditions; however, your monitoring decisions will depend upon your capacity. For the historical society in western MA that I mentioned earlier, I suggested purchasing an environmental monitoring tool that allows you to set a threshold for humidity and sends you a text and an email when that threshold is passed. For another organization, where one volunteer was in the storage space regularly but money was very limited, the use of an inexpensive min/max monitor checked and recorded at a regular interval during humid months might be more feasible until additional funds come available. Larger institutions with committed staffing may wish to purchase dataloggers and commit time to exploring trends in sustainable preservation environments. In the US, much of this research is being performed by the Image Permanence Institute. Their website has an extensive list of resources.

One way to get an additional perspective on risks is to bring in the fire department. This is also a good opportunity to discuss priority collections with them for salvage in the case of an emergency. You will also want to let staff and researchers know where risks might lie. Clearly label any hazardous materials in both your discovery guides and on boxes.

Finally, explore your options. If you have an untenable space and an alternate suitable space may be available, make that a long term goal. If you don't have an alternate suitable space, explore micro changes such as the purchase of a freezer. But even if those aren't options, you still have a list of potential useful actions to mitigate environmental issues including moving materials away from outside walls, windows and heating sources, creating space for air flow in storage areas, moving materials away from vents or using baffles, and purchasing dehumidifiers.

Now let's move in to mitigation of specific problems.



## Mitigation: Mold

- Move quickly to address water issues and high humidity
- Assess the extent of outbreak
- Quarantine materials
- Review your insurance information
- Contact a service provider w/ collections experience ASAP
  - DO NOT try to handle wide-spread mold infestations by yourself
- Wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
  - gloves, N-90/N-100 mask, full length clothing



All molds pose a health risk and some people are more at risk than others including those with compromised immune systems; those with allergies to molds, mushrooms, penicillin, etc.; and those with respiratory issues (asthma). Mold is first a sensitizer which then becomes an allergen and then can later become toxic.

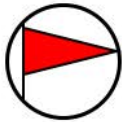
Typing mold takes time, is costly, and is often inconclusive or offers an incomplete picture. Knowing the kind of mold also doesn't affect the general course of action. If you have mold you pretty much know you have a problem that you need to deal with (active mold rendered dormant, dormant mold removed.) Letting it linger isn't good for staff and researchers, and can also result in significant loss of content.

You should always move quickly to resolve water infiltration and high relative humidity. Understanding issues in your storage space and performing environmental monitoring can help you address problems before they become disasters, but sometimes things happen that are beyond your control. If you do have a mold outbreak, assess the extent, quarantine the materials if possible, and review your insurance information to determine whether you have coverage and to what extent. Consider reaching out to other organizations that have dealt with a mold outbreak, or contacting a conservator or preservation professional to discuss next steps.

Consider the value, uniqueness, and importance of the moldy material before choosing a route. In most instances, contacting a service provider that has experience working with collections should be high on your list of steps. Whether you choose to use a provider or not, talking with them about options and costs will help you plan your course of action. In general, you will want to avoid any treatment that involves heating your materials or irradiating them.

Because of the potential health effects of mold, infestations are ideally treated by professionals with the appropriate equipment. Many service providers will take even very small amounts of affected material. If you must handle moldy materials, it is best to have Personal Protective Equipment on hand. This includes gloves, goggles, an N-90 or N-100 mask (NOT a dust mask!), and full length clothing.

My photo.



## Mitigation: Pests

- Follow Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices
- Identify pest infiltration areas
- Bag and quarantine infested items
- Clean the area
- Identify the pest and choose extermination method
- Monitor!
- Pesticides **ONLY** as a last resort



Like mold, pests pose a risk to the longevity of our collections, and they are more likely to be active in warm, dark, and humid areas. The best practice in cultural heritage is to follow Integrated Pest Management techniques. These include preventive measures such as sealing holes and cracks or filling them with steel wool, investing in door sweeps, moving plantings several feet away from the building and creating a perimeter of gravel or asphalt, routine housekeeping and trash removal, and reducing clutter in collections storage areas. They also include monitoring using a variety of traps and collecting data about trends over time.

The goal of monitoring is to help identify the source(s) of the pest infiltration and then to identify solutions to stop the infiltration or infestation. If an infestation has established itself in a collection item or items, these should be bagged and quarantined, the surrounding area should be cleaned, and efforts should be made to identify the type of pest causing the damage. Some pests are very difficult to eradicate, particularly if you have large collections of taxidermied animals, ethnographic material, or natural fabrics like wool and silk. The method of extermination will be determined by the object type, the extent of the infestation, the type of infesting pest, and institutional resources. Freezing and anoxic treatments are the two most common choices based upon efficacy, cost, and lack of toxicity. The Harry Ransom Center's

Approaches to Insect Problems in Paper and Books includes a helpful list of (non-paper) items that should never be frozen – this is relevant for water damaged or mold affected items as well! <http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/conservation/resources/insects/>

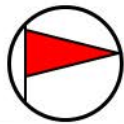
While insect pests can cause extensive collection damage while remaining relatively unseen, the human health risk comes primarily from vertebrates (although insects, spiders, etc seem to be a mental health risk for many!). Rodents and bats serve as vectors for a variety of diseases, and the risk is greater if you come in to contact with their saliva, urine, feces, or blood.

It is important to use pesticides only as a very last resort, and never directly on collections without discussion with a specialist. It's also worth noting that there has been a long history of attempting to reduce pest activity in collections and much of this treatment now poses a potential hazard. One example is the wide-spread use of arsenic to preserve taxidermied animals. Likewise, mercury was used to prevent pests in botanical specimens. The American Museum of Natural History has an excellent resource called Residual Pesticides that outlines steps for figuring out if pesticides were used on your collection materials.

My photo.

RESOURCE: [Museumpests.net](http://Museumpests.net)





## Mitigation: Combustibles/Explosives



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Hazards lurk in places we might not expect. We may make assumptions that the guns in our collection are not loaded, that the powder horns are empty, that grenades have been rendered inert. Often, a lack of familiarity with handling these types of objects leads to lack of action. But you will find a veritable trove of potentially combustible and explosive materials in collections storage areas. And not all of them are obvious. And not all of them are collections items.

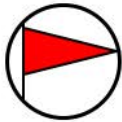
Unless specific documentation exists, assume guns, mines, grenades, etc. contain live ammunition. Consider the item's value to your collection and contact your police department for assistance, which may include deactivation or disposal. Anything that is kept or anything where you are unsure of the deactivation status should be clearly documented in both discovery guides and in your emergency plan.

Identify any particularly combustible materials in your collection – for example nitrate film – and understand that munitions and nitrate will have specialized handling procedures. They will also have insurance implications that will affect your decision to keep or dispose of them.

On the flip side of this, we may also have things in the collection that were designed to

be fire retardant at a time when the materials used weren't understood as a health risk. These include objects like gas masks and fire suits, which may be made with asbestos, as well as other early fire fighting equipment.

I also want to point out that while not all of us will have combustible or explosive collections items, a surprising number of organizations keep materials that pose these types of hazards in or near collections storage areas. These include solvents and certain cleaning supplies. Limiting collections storage areas to collections materials and having an emergency plan that has been shared and practiced will help in reducing risks to humans and to collections.



## General Advice

- If it's moldy, smelly, flakey, broken, bubbling, gooey, covered in powdery-looking spots, or just an actual weapon, it probably warrants further investigation.
- Don't panic. If you have it, someone somewhere probably has dealt with it already.
- Ask for advice. Not just from *your* professional network, but from allied professionals. Some places to look: AIC, ALA's PARS, AAM, AASLH, SAA, C2CC, and many more.

Ultimately, if it's moldy, smelly, flakey, broken, bubbling, gooey, covered in powdery-looking spots, or just an actual weapon, it probably warrants further investigation.

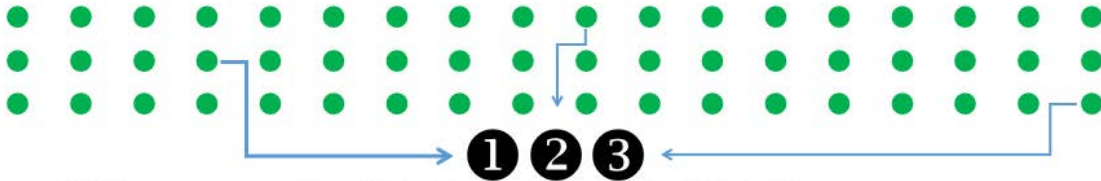
Don't panic. If you have it, someone somewhere probably has dealt with it already. There is a vast world of professional practice devoted to examining objects of questionable stability and formulating plans for reducing risks. And remember the wiki resource library prepared as part of this series. While I hope to have given you a sense of the issues and some tools for dealing with more common hazards, particular needs will vary across organizations. Many of the aspects discussed today are explored more deeply in the resources on the wiki.

Ask for advice. Not just from *your* professional network, but from allied professionals. Some places to look: AIC, ALA's PARS, AAM, AASLH, SAA, C2CC, and many more.



## Your Objective: Re-Consider

- Thinking again about the Swingate Public Library:
  - Have you identified any additional risks in the collections?
  - If the Library has no money but some staff time, which activity would you undertake now?
  - Identify and prioritize 3 activities for the future. What & who might you need to enact these projects?



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[Make sure that the following come up: long history of ad hoc collecting, materials arrive out of blue (presumably w/o deed of gift) this will lead into mission/cx dev policies/deeds of gift as free ('free') ways to address problem materials.]



## Your Objective: Re-Consider

- The group spent about 6 min. reconsidering the following:
  - Have you identified any additional risks in the collections?
  - If the Library has no money but some staff time, which activity would you undertake now?
  - Identify and prioritize 3 activities for the future. What & who might you need to enact these projects?

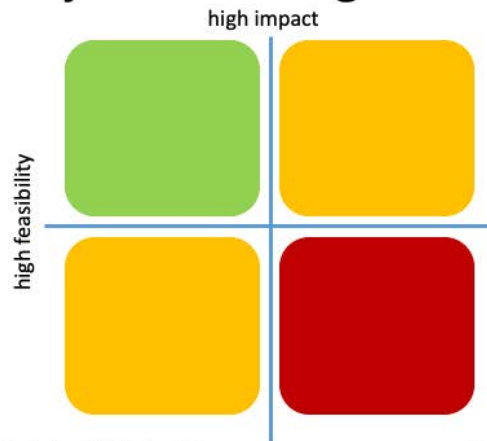
To hear Jessica's summary of the issues, access, the unedited version of the webinar from the link below.

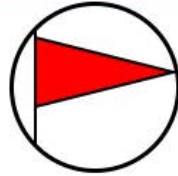
[Make sure that the following come up: long history of ad hoc collecting, materials arrive out of blue (presumably w/o deed of gift) this will lead into mission/cx dev policies/deeds of gift as free ('free') ways to address problem materials.]



## In the End, It's ALL Project Planning

- Know your collections
  - Prepare your policies
  - Assess your risks
  - Identify your resources
  - Think about your goals
  - Determine your priorities
  - Consider your capabilities
  - Make a plan!
- (and do some of the easy things now)





# Overcoming Project Hurdles

Approaches to Identifying and Managing Collection Red Flags

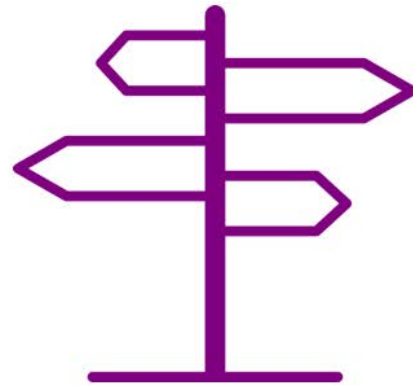
Pt. 2 Content – Yvonne Ng  
Evaluating and Managing Ethical Issues in Collections

Thank you Jessica. In this second half of the webinar, I'll be focusing on red flags we might encounter related to the **content** of our collections; in particular, the **ethical** challenges that emerge in collecting, preserving, and providing access to different types of content.



## Part 2: Content

- Introduction: Ethics [5 min]
- Scenarios: Discussion and Strategies [32 min]
  - “Dealing with the Past”
  - “Collecting in the Now”
  - “Access to Offensive Materials”
  - “Community Archives Project”
- Q & A (Jessica and Yvonne) [7 min]
- Close [1 min]



Graphic: Humotika from the Noun Project

I'll start with a brief introduction about ethics in general. Then we'll spend the remainder of the webinar exploring 4 scenarios related to different types of content. For each we'll talk about the ethical concerns that might be raised, and then I'll share some useful strategies that others in the field have employed that enabled them to move ahead with their projects. We'll then conclude with time for questions and feedback for both Jessica and me.





## Introduction



- No single correct answer to ethical questions, no one-size-fits-all approach.
- Ethics are based on our core values, sense of justice, empathy and compassion.
- Ethics outline our responsibilities to each other. They are principles that guide our social behavior, also determined by relationships and context.
- Codes of ethics change over time.
- Ethics hold us to a higher standard than the law.

Graphic: Delwar Hossein from the Noun Project

To begin, it's important to note that there is **no single correct answer to our ethical questions, no one-size-fits-all approach**. I think we all know this, and hopefully it will become even more evident as we go through the scenarios. This webinar may not give you the answers for a specific ethical problem in your collections, but I hope that the questions and strategies we discuss will inspire your own approaches.

To ground our discussion, let me offer a baseline definition of ethics. First, **Ethics are based on our core values, sense of justice, AND our empathy and compassion**. This comes from two ways of thinking about ethics -- one that sees it in terms of universal principles, impartiality, and justice, and another coming out of feminist theory that sees ethics more contextually in terms of relationships, care, empathy, and response. Let's not argue the merits of one approach over the other, but keep both senses in mind as we go forth in this webinar.

In the most basic terms, **Ethics outline our responsibilities to each other. They are principles that guide our social behavior, that are also determined by relationships and particular context**. Sometimes we face dilemmas in which our principles clash or compete with each other, and at those times we reflect back on our values, consider who is affected by our decisions, and our relationship and responsibility to them.

A *code of ethics* provides a means for a group of people to define their collective values and principles, and to hold themselves accountable to them. But they are not set in stone. While there may be some very basic timeless principles, **Codes of ethics can and should evolve** to reflect our contemporary sense of right and wrong.

Finally, **Ethics hold us to a higher standard than the law.** The law is a baseline set of rules and regulations, whereas our ethics move us to think and act beyond the requirements of the law. Following one's ethical principles is often matter of conscience rather than enforcement or punishment.



## General Resources on Ethics in Collections

Society of American Archivists, [Core Values Statement and Code of Ethics](#).

American Library Association, [Code of Ethics](#).

American Alliance of Museums, [Ethics, Standards and Best Practices](#).

Zine Librarians Interest Group, [Zine Librarians Code of Ethics](#).

Myriam Springuel and Burt Altman, [Code of Ethics and Other Institutional Documents from the Museum Point-of-View and Library Point-of-View](#) [webinar].

Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor, [From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics: Radical Empathy in the Archives](#).

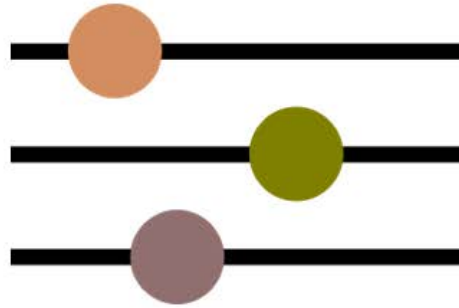
Here are some links to resources on ethics in the library, archives, and museum world. *All* the links in this presentation today are also available in the Resource Library. The first three on the list are the core Codes of Ethics published by professional associations, ALA, SAA, and AAM. Most of you probably familiar with at least one of these Codes.

I included the Zine Librarians Code of Ethics as an example of a code that addresses the issues faced by a particular type of content and community of creators and users.

If you're interested in Codes of Ethics, their purpose and function, the webinar by Myriam Springuel and Burt Altman provides a nice overview. Finally, the article by Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor is an insightful one that discusses radical empathy as a framework for archival ethics.

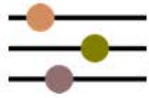


## Scenarios



Graphic: Hysen Drogu from the Noun Project

Let's move right into the scenarios. For each scenario, we will launch a discussion pane and ask you to spend 2 minutes brainstorming ethical questions that come to mind and any strategies you want to share. Then, following the brainstorm for each scenario, I will talk us through some of those questions and strategies.



## Scenario 1: Dealing with the Past

Your non-tribal collecting institution has a historic collection of indigenous music recordings. The analog tapes are degrading and there is an opportunity to undertake a mass digitization project for preservation and to provide online access.

Legally, the recordings belong to your institution. However, you know that they were created in the context of colonial extraction and appropriation, and that laws do not provide the means to recognize the indigenous group's rights in relation to the recordings. The recordings may also have cultural, religious, and political meanings that your institution are not aware of.

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## Whiteboard / Popcorn:



- What ethical questions need to be addressed in relation to this digitization project?
- What strategies can be employed to proceed with this project in an ethical way?

So we are going to switch to the discussion pane in a second, where the text of the scenario and questions here will still be visible, and ask you to share your thoughts on:

- What ethical questions need to be addressed in relation to this digitization project?
- What strategies can be employed to proceed with this project in an ethical way?

We'll spend the next 2 minutes on this.



## Whiteboard / Popcorn:

The group spent 2 minutes discussing this question. A complete transcript of Chat 2, Dealing with the Past, can be downloaded on the webinar's home page found in the text below.

- What ethical questions need to be addressed in relation to this digitization project?
- What strategies can be employed to proceed with this project in an ethical way?

*Made possible through the generous support of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.*

So we are going to switch to the discussion pane in a second, where the text of the scenario and questions here will still be visible, and ask you to share your thoughts on:

- What ethical questions need to be addressed in relation to this digitization project?
- What strategies can be employed to proceed with this project in an ethical way?

We'll spend the next 2 minutes on this.



## Some Ethical Questions...

- Given how it was acquired, does my institution have moral rights to this collection? Should the collection be repatriated?
- Whose knowledge and value systems should form the basis of policies concerning this collection?
- Should access be restricted for culturally sensitive materials? Should certain materials not be digitized / preserved? Who decides?
- Should information resources, like catalog records, be updated to reflect non-Eurocentric understanding of the materials?
- Will time-consuming consultation impact the survival and preservation of the materials?

In preparation for this webinar, I made a list of some of the questions that occurred to me [which overlapped with many of the questions you have raised as well [?]]. I'm certain *many* of you have more experience working with indigenous and Native American collections than me, and I don't make any claim to expertise in this area. I did consult a number of useful resources, which I will share with you, that informed this section.

My first question was **Given how it was acquired, does my institution have moral rights to this collection?**

Some jurisdictions around the world recognize moral rights of indigenous communities over works that draw from their traditions, customs, and beliefs, as in this scenario. This does not apply legally in the US, but could be used voluntarily as an ethical guide.

So, if my institution doesn't have moral rights, **Should the collection be repatriated?**

International and national laws recognize repatriation rights of indigenous communities. This does not explicitly include archival materials, but repatriation *could* be offered voluntarily in that spirit. But, is that the right choice for the care and management of the collection?

**Whose knowledge and value systems should form the basis of policies concerning this collection** for example in relation to its digitization?



Native American and “Western” approaches to caring for collections may sometimes differ. For example, a Native American knowledge system might dictate that certain materials of value should *not* be artificially preserved. Or, there may be objects considered sacred to Native Americans that require specialized care and rituals not normally performed as part of Western preservation.

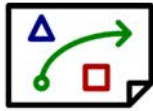
Related to this question, **Should access be restricted for culturally sensitive materials? Should certain materials not be digitized / preserved? Who decides?**

Culturally sensitive materials can include information that is private, sacred, or taken without consent. There may be information that is considered specialized and privileged knowledge.

**Should information resources, like catalog records, be updated to reflect non-Eurocentric understanding of the materials?**

Descriptive information created by people with little knowledge of the material’s context can be inaccurate, derogatory, or just not describe or classify people and their materials in the way that they would describe or classify themselves. Whose perspective should information resources reflect?

Most people would say that community consultation is ethically important and necessary. But we know that building trust and relationships takes a lot of time. How **Will time-consuming consultation impact the survival and preservation of the materials?**

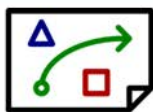


## Strategies

- Read the [Protocols for Native American Archival Materials](#) from First Archivist Circle.



So given all these questions, what are some ways to move forward? First, a key resource is the **Protocols for Native American Archival Materials**, drafted by a group of cultural heritage professionals from 15 Native American, First Nation, and Aboriginal communities. These protocols go into much more detail than we can cover today, and would be a good first place to look.



## Strategies

- Consult community and engage in shared stewardship.
- Incorporate traditional knowledge and value systems into collecting, processing, preservation and access policies.
- Example: [Support Documents for Community Decision-Making](#) from the Sustainable Heritage Network.



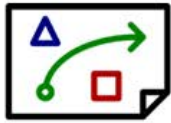
THE SUSTAINABLE HERITAGE NETWORK

One key recommendation from the Protocols is to **consult community and engage in shared stewardship**. The point is to build relationships of mutual respect and trust.

“Shared stewardship” is an alternative concept to traditional custody. As Michelle Caswell has explained, it sees material less as property and more as a cultural asset held in trust by an institution and community.

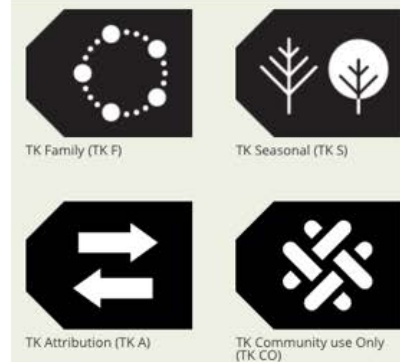
As part of shared stewardship, another strategy is to **Incorporate traditional knowledge and value systems into collecting, processing, preservation and access policies** in a meaningful way. For more on this, check out the article by Kim Christen linked at the end of this section.

To put these ideas into practice, the **Sustainable Heritage Network** has useful templates and examples of agreements and policies on their webpage linked here.



## Strategies

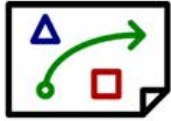
- Respect restrictions on culturally sensitive materials.
- Consider moral rights and ethics of care beyond intellectual property law. Understand original context of collecting, and that underlying principles of copyright law are not universal.
- Example: [TK Licenses & Labels](#)



Protecting privacy and confidentiality is nothing new for archives, and the principle is embedded in the SAA Code of Ethics. So **Respecting restrictions on culturally sensitive materials** is just a matter of applying this already-held idea to the different kinds of restrictions that exist in traditional knowledge systems.

This is part of being **Considerate to the moral rights and ethics of care beyond intellectual property law**. For example, copyright law does not address concepts of community ownership, privileged knowledge, protection of ancient works, and intangible cultural heritage.

**TK Licenses & Labels by localcontexts.org** linked here, is a great example of how these principles can be put into practice. They are an extra-legal tool designed especially for tribal materials held in non-tribal institutions and in the public domain. They are analogous to Creative Commons, to make users aware of appropriate access, use, and circulation of tribal materials. The graphic here is just a few examples of the TK Labels.



## Strategies

- Engage in collaborative curation. Improve description with culturally appropriate and accurate information. Add notes or disclaimers about inaccurate or disrespectful content.
- Encourage community access and use of the collection.

- Example: [Mukurtu](#)



The final strategies for this scenario. **Engage in collaborative curation. Improve description with culturally appropriate and accurate information. Add notes or disclaimers about inaccurate or disrespectful content.** Doing so can only improve identification, understanding, retrieval and access.

### **Encourage community access and use of the collection.**

Make the collection a valued resource for the community it represents.

A great tool for collaborative curation and access is **Mukurtu**. Related to the TK Licenses project, Mukurtu is a free and open-source content management system designed for collaborative management and sharing of digital cultural heritage using community-defined access protocols, including TK Labels.



## Additional Resources on Culturally Responsive Care

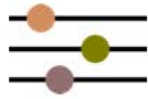
Kimberly Christen, [\*Tribal Archives, Traditional Knowledge, and Local Contexts: Why the “s” Matters.\*](#)

Ellen M. Ryan, [\*Case Studies in Archival Ethics: Identifying Culturally Sensitive American Indian Material in a Non-tribal Institution.\*](#)

Bergis Jules, [\*Confronting Our Failure of Care Around the Legacies of Marginalized People in the Archives.\*](#)

Tara Robertson. [\*Digitization: Just Because You Can, Doesn't Mean You Should.\*](#)

Here are some resources related to Culturally Responsive Care for Native American and other materials. Kim Christen's article gives more information on TK Labels and Mukurtu. Ellen Ryan's case study describes a consultation process between Idaho State University and the Shoshone-Bannock tribes at Fort Hall. Not specific to Native American materials, Bergis Jules' article takes a critical big picture look at the impact of erasures and the inability to acknowledge uncomfortable truths in our archives. Tara Robertson's article looks at the ethical issues raised by the digitization of a collection with a different kind of cultural sensitivity, the lesbian porn magazine *On Our Backs*.



## Scenario 2: Collecting in the Now

Your public collecting institution is interested in collecting social media (e.g. Tweets, YouTube videos) arising from a contemporary social movement, as many important events are being documented by individuals on social media rather than by traditional news outlets.

The movement is decentralized and involves many grassroots organizations, activists, journalists and concerned citizens. Lately, as the movement gains momentum, government and police have been cracking down on protests and those they see as “leaders.” There are concerns about surveillance and harassment.

Let's try another scenario.

Your public collecting institution is interested in collecting social media (e.g. Tweets, YouTube videos) arising from a contemporary social movement, as many important events are being documented by individuals on social media rather than by traditional news outlets.

The movement is decentralized and involves many grassroots organizations, activists, journalists and concerned citizens. Lately, as the movement gains momentum, government and police have been cracking down on protests and those they see as “leaders.” There are concerns about surveillance and harassment.



## Whiteboard / Popcorn:

The group spent 2 minutes discussing this question. A complete transcript of Chat 3, Collecting in the now, can be downloaded on the webinar's home page found in the text below.

- What ethical questions need to be addressed in relation to this collection project?
- What strategies can be employed to proceed with this project in an ethical way?

*Made possible through the generous support of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.*

So again, let's spend 2 minutes to share your thoughts on this scenario:  
What ethical questions need to be addressed in relation to this collection project?  
What strategies can be employed to proceed with this project in an ethical way?





## Some Ethical Questions...

- Could my collection draw unwanted attention to someone, be used to invade their privacy or for surveillance purposes?
- Is published social media “public data”? Do I need consent to collect? Is providing an option to “opt out” sufficient?
- Consent vs. informed consent: are people aware of the extent of what is collected and potential consequences?
- Should user-deleted posts continue to be preserved and made accessible?
- Will important voices / parts of history be lost if we don’t capture social media posts while we can?
- Should I violate the terms of service of the social media platform provider in order to harvest and preserve content?

Here are some of the questions that occurred to me [which again are similar to many you have raised]

### **Could my collection draw unwanted attention to someone, be used to invade their privacy or surveille them?**

Social media are contemporary records, they contain personal information of everyday people who might not normally find themselves in an archive, and there’s no traditional deed of gift. And in this scenario, creators or subjects may be youth, people of color, activists, or other people who may be more vulnerable to actions of authorities.

### **Is published social media “public data”?**

Should there be any expectation of privacy if it’s already out there in the world? Is social media public like a published work, or is it more like a conversation I’m having outside with a group of friends that I would not expect a stranger to be recording?

### **Do I need consent to collect?**

I think we would agree in general that consent is important, but if you’re collecting a hashtag, for example, there could be thousands of individuals. So *what degree* of consent is good enough? **Is providing an option to “opt out” sufficient?**

Then there is **Consent vs. informed consent: are people who are consenting aware of**

**the extent of what is collected and the potential consequences?**

For example, people who consent may not be aware of the metadata that is collected along with the content, or how the data might be used by others.

**Should user-deleted posts continue to be preserved and made accessible in the collection?**

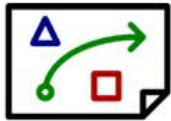
This relates back to the question of public data -- is it considered "already out there"?

On the flip side, **Will important voices / parts of history be lost if we don't capture social media posts?**

There are so many ethical concerns, but what do we lose if we don't do anything? A lot of underreported issues from under-represented voices find their way on social media, and only on social media. Are we writing those voices out of history if they are not collected?

**Should I violate the terms of service of the social media platform provider in order to harvest and preserve content?**

Those third-party terms of service may not allow for collecting, scraping, downloading, etc.



## Strategies

- Recognize that public data about an individual, when brought together, can be revealing and invasive of privacy, and privacy of those in individual's network.
- Use methods to anonymize data, but recognize that de-anonymization can occur through analysis.
- Example: Banksy case.

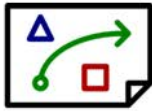


Image: Wikimedia Commons

Here are some ways of working through these questions to move forward in this scenario.

First, it is worthwhile to **Recognize that public data, like social media, about an individual, when brought together and analyzed, can be revealing and invasive of privacy, and privacy of those in individual's network. So we can use methods to anonymize data, but de-anonymization can still occur through analysis.**

A well-known example of this is the secretive and unidentified UK graffiti artist Banksy. Last year a group of researchers combed through data in the public domain -- newspaper articles, geography of his artworks, electoral rolls -- to confirm a hypothesis about his identity. As Jacob Metcalf and Kate Crawford outline in an article which I'll share, the researchers' analysis revealed patterns about a private citizen's behaviour and movements that clearly seem invasive of his privacy.



## Strategies

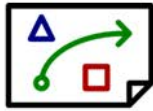
- Get informed consent from content creators.
- Provide a clear removal policy and mechanism.



With that in mind...

It's best to find a way to **Get informed consent from content creators**. Informed consent means consent given voluntarily, where the use and purpose are fully disclosed, and the subject is fully able to understand the consequences.

**Provide a clear removal policy and mechanism**. Especially if you're using an opt-out consent model, there needs to be a clear and responsive way for people to do so.

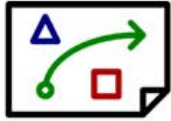


## Strategies

- Only collect users or content that have certain threshold of popularity.
- Consider collecting links instead of content.
- Example: [\*Beyond the hashtags: #Ferguson, #Blacklivesmatter, and the online struggle for offline justice.\*](#)



The following two creative strategies come from the *Beyond the Hashtags* report linked here. The authors collected tweets to study online BLM activism, but to prevent bringing unwanted scrutiny on previously obscure users, they only collected tweets by users with over 3000 followers, or tweets that had at least 100 retweets. They also posted links to tweets instead of reproducing them, which allowed for users to delete their tweets from both their account and the collection at once.



## Strategies

- Publish ethical codes / policies to model norms and practices for social media archiving.
- Example: [Documenting the Now](#).



Finally, **Publish ethical codes / policies to model norms and practices for social media archiving**. Social media archiving is new, and the ethical and rights management issues are not all worked out. Creating norms and practices will help guide other collecting institutions and create broader understanding and acceptance. For example, [Documenting the Now](#) is a joint project of three university partners that is exploring and documenting these issues and also developing tools for Twitter collection and curation. They have an active blog and Slack channel that is worth checking out.



## Resources on Social Media Archiving Ethics

NCSU Libraries, [Social Media Archives Toolkit: Legal and Ethical Implications](#).

Bergis Jules. [Surveillance and Social Media Archiving](#).

Jacob Metcalf and Kate Crawford. [Where are Human Subjects in Big Data Research? The Emerging Ethics Divide](#).

Annette Markham. [OKCupid data release fiasco](#).

Here are a few more resources on social media archiving. NC State's social media archiving toolkit documents their work to build a social media archiving program in their libraries. The next article, by Bergis Jules again, comes from the Doc Now blog. Bergis is one of the principles on that project. Metcalf and Crawford come from the big data world, and their article was the source of the Banksy example I shared. The Annette Markham article looks at the OK Cupid fiasco, which you may be familiar with, in which a researcher published un-anonymized, personally identifying data of thousands of users of the internet dating site, claiming it was ethical because the data was already online.



## Scenario 3: Access to Offensive Materials

Your library has received a Request for Reconsideration of Library Material from a patron regarding a well-known children's book published decades ago. The book portrays a class of people in a way that most contemporary audiences, including your library's review panel, would agree is clearly offensive.

The panel must decide what to do with the book -- keep it on the shelf, restrict access to it somehow, remove it from circulation entirely, or something else.

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The panel must decide what to do with the book -- keep it on the shelf, restrict access to it somehow, remove it from circulation entirely, or something else.





## Whiteboard / Popcorn:



- What ethical questions arise in this decision-making process?
- What strategies can be employed to deal with this challenged book?

Again, let's spend 2 minutes brainstorming about:  
What ethical questions arise in this decision-making process?  
What strategies can be employed to deal with this challenged book?



## Whiteboard / Popcorn:

The group spent 2 minutes discussing this question. A complete transcript of Chat 4, Access to Offensive Materials, can be downloaded on the webinar's home page found in the text below.

- What ethical questions arise in this decision-making process?
- What strategies can be employed to deal with this challenged book?

*Made possible through the generous support of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.*

Again, let's spend 2 minutes brainstorming about:

What ethical questions arise in this decision-making process?

What strategies can be employed to deal with this challenged book?



## Some Ethical Questions...

- Should a library deem any materials offensive? Should it opine on what is suitable for children and teens to read?
- Does removing offensive materials from circulation violate freedom of information, freedom to read?
- Does keeping offensive material in circulation serve to normalize and reinforce negative stereotypes?
- Does keeping offensive material on the shelf discourage marginalized groups from seeing the library as a welcoming space?
- Is it in the interest of children to shield them from viewing offensive material, or can exposing them to it help teach critical thinking?

### **Should a library deem *any* materials offensive? Should it opine on what is suitable for children and teens to read?**

Intellectual freedom is a key value in libraries, and many would say it's not their place to say, or to censor or restrict material even if it is offensive, or decide for parents what is suitable for their children.

### **Does removing offensive materials from circulation violate freedom of information, freedom to read, which are fundamental values for libraries?**

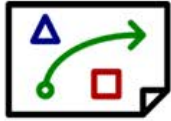
On the flip side, **Does keeping offensive material in circulation serve to normalize and reinforce negative stereotypes** about already marginalized groups? Is staying "neutral" not being neutral at all?

### **Related to that question, Does keeping offensive material on the shelf discourage marginalized groups from seeing the library as a welcoming space?**

So in this sense, does it actually limit access to library materials by those who might need it most?

### **Is it in the interest of children to shield them from viewing offensive material, or can exposing them to it help teach critical thinking?**

We don't know what people will do with information. Offensive material can be used, for example, to educate and expose the prejudice that underlies it.

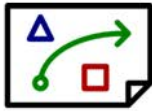


## Strategies

- Have a documented collection development policy / selection criteria in place.
- Refer to principles of intellectual freedom found in the ALA [Library Bill of Rights](#).



So here are some strategies. First, be prepared. **Have a documented collection development policy / selection criteria in place** that outlines the objectives, responsibility, criteria, procedures for selection and reconsideration, and policies on controversial materials. In the policy, you can **Refer to principles of intellectual freedom found in the ALA [Library Bill of Rights](#)**. So when controversies arise, you can use your policies to help rationally explain your library's collecting program.



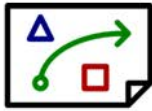
## Strategies

- Have documented procedures in place for formal reconsideration process, and follow the process.
- Be prepared to explain the process and timeline to individual making the challenge.



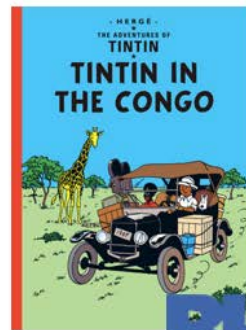
**Have documented procedures in place for the formal reconsideration process, and follow the process.** You want to handle challenges in a consistent way and enable those doing the review to not rely on their personal beliefs but on established institutional standards. Your decision-making has to be *and appear to be* fair and judicious.

**Be prepared to explain the process and timeline to the individual making the challenge.** You want to be able to respond respectfully and clearly. People have the right to complain and they want to know they are being heard.



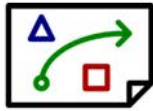
## Strategies

- Consider reshelving the book to a historical collection or adult section.
- Example: *Tintin au Congo* at Brooklyn Public Library



**Bklyn**  
Public Library

This scenario is actually based on the example of *Tintin au Congo*, a Belgian children's comic book from the 1930s that is frequently challenged for being racially offensive. Brooklyn Public Library is one institution that received a challenge. The decided that was that the book was indeed offensive, and moved the book to a special collection of historic children's literature that was available by appointment only and used primarily by researchers. This choice was not without controversy, but moving challenging materials to adult or more restricted areas it is a choice that some libraries make.



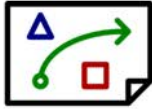
## Strategies

- Consider keeping book on the shelf, while creating programming that addresses the issues it raises.
- Example: *Tintin au Congo* at Jones Library, Amherst.



To contrast, another library that received this challenge was Jones Library in Amherst, Massachusetts. They decided that changing the access status of a book constituted a form of censorship, which is contrary to their mission. They stated that it was not the job of the librarian to say what a community should or should not read. So they decided to keep the book on the shelf, but suggested creating programming in the library around the issue of racism.

I think this is a good example of different libraries making different, but both ethically considered, choices that they felt made sense in their specific contexts.



## Strategies

- Contact the ALA [Office of Intellectual Freedom](#) for help.



The final strategy for this scenario. If all is lost, you can **Contact the ALA [Office of Intellectual Freedom](#) for help**. The office has a lot of resources on its webpage, and an online mechanism for reporting challenges and asking for assistance.





## Additional Resources on Challenged Materials

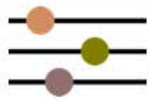
ALA, [Challenge Support](#).

ALA, [Information Freedom](#).

New York Times, [A Library's Approach to Books that Offend](#).

Comic Book Legal Defense Fund, [Massachusetts Library Stands by TinTin](#).

Here are a couple more useful links to ALA with lots of information. And below, two articles describing the TinTin decisions at BPL and Jones Libraries.



## Scenario 4: Community Archives Project

Your institution is taking part in a community archiving project in collaboration with a community that has been historically under- and mis-represented in archives. Your institution hopes to build a lasting relationship with the community and engage it in preservation and use of the archives.

While the community understands the long-term value of their materials and wants to them to be preserved and accessible, they are also suspicious and wary of the institution. For example, some members of the community may want to scan and digitize their materials but do not necessarily want to deposit them with the institution, allow access, or provide detailed identifying metadata.

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## Whiteboard / Popcorn:



- What ethical questions need to be addressed in relation to this community-based project?
- What strategies can be employed to proceed with this project in an ethical way?

What ethical questions need to be addressed in relation to this community-based project?

What strategies can be employed to proceed with this project in an ethical way?



## Whiteboard / Popcorn:

The group spent 2 minutes discussing this question. A complete transcript of Chat 5, Community Archives Project, can be downloaded on the webinar's home page found in the text below.

- What ethical questions need to be addressed in relation to this community-based project?
- What strategies can be employed to proceed with this project in an ethical way?

*Made possible through the generous support of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.*

What ethical questions need to be addressed in relation to this community-based project?

What strategies can be employed to proceed with this project in an ethical way?



## Some Ethical Questions...

- How do we build a more diverse, inclusive and accurate collection, without repeating missteps of the past?
- To what degree should I encourage community members to deposit with my institution, allow access, and share metadata if they are reluctant?
- Does the idea of a “citizen archivist” devalue the knowledge and skills of professional archivists?
- How flexible should we be with promoting established archival standards in community-based archives?
- Is it irresponsible to hand digitized records to the community if it does not have resources for ongoing preservation?

Here are some of my ethical questions [which again are similar to many you have raised]

**How do we build a more diverse, inclusive and accurate collection, something we all want, without repeating missteps of the past,** like resorting to the extractive colonial approaches we talked about earlier?

If the community has well-founded reasons for being suspicious of the institution, **To what degree should I encourage them to deposit, allow access, and share metadata if they are reluctant?**

What is my responsibility for protecting the community versus building the collection?

**Does the idea of a “citizen archivist” devalue the knowledge and skills of professional archivists?**

The idea of personal digital archiving is very popular these days, and community archive projects promote a more flexible idea of what we call archival work. What effect does this democratization have on archival professionals?

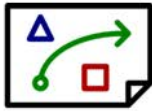
Related, **How flexible should we be with established archival standards in community-based archival initiatives?**

Is it ok to promote less-than-ideal but perhaps more realistic practices as acceptable

standards?

**Is it irresponsible to hand digitized records to the community if it does not have resources for ongoing preservation?**

Is it fair to digitize materials for people, and expect them to be able to manage them going forward on their own?



## Strategies

- Center goals / policies on people and communities instead of collections.
- Provide tools and space for creating, organizing, and sharing community archives.

- Example: [DCPL Memory Lab](#)

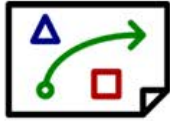


Here are some strategies. First, **Center goals / policies on people and communities, not on building your collections.** Over time, your collections *will* probably grow and become more diverse if the institution is a trusted partner in the community. Trying to make collections diverse when the institution is actually *not* in its makeup or constituency risks repeating colonial patterns of the past.

**Provide tools and space for creating, organizing, and sharing community archives.**

Support the community with the parts of the archival process that are difficult for them to do on their own.

For example, **DC Public Library's Memory Lab** provides otherwise difficult-to-access audiovisual playback machines, digital converters, and a computer that patrons sign up to use to digitize their old videotapes, cassettes, and slides.



## Strategies

- “Post-custodial” collecting framework, archivist as facilitator.
- Recognize community expertise. Adopt “with” instead of “for” approach.
- Engage in ongoing self-reflection with the community about process.

- Example: [SAADA](#)

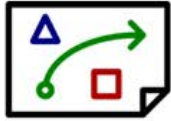


The term **“Post-custodial”** describes a collecting framework in which archivists provide management and oversight without acquiring or taking custody of records from record creators. The **archivist acts more as a facilitator** in partnership with a community of record creators. **Expertise** on both sides is harnessed in the work of preservation, description, and access. It is a **“with” instead of “for” approach**.

Even with best intentions and planning, missteps may occur. This is not a reason to not pursue community archive projects. Instead, as you go along, **engage in ongoing self-reflection with the community about the process**.

The South Asian American Digital Archive is an example of a post-custodial archive. On their website they discuss their approach, and how they have gathered feedback from their community to better understand needs and interests.





## Strategies

- Recognize power relationships between archives and marginalized communities, and respect resistance to traditional archival institutions and approaches.
- Be inclusive of varied formats/modes of expression (e.g. “ephemera,” oral histories)
- Example: [People’s Archive of Police Violence](#).

A PEOPLE'S ARCHIVE OF  
**POLICE**  
VIOLENCE  
IN CLEVELAND

**Recognize power relationships between archives and marginalized communities, and respect resistance to traditional institutions and approaches.** Instead of feeling misjudged or guilty, let’s build understanding, and address ways of doing things that exclude or oppress.

For example, one way to open up archives to a more diverse community is to **Be inclusive of varied formats/modes of expression (e.g. “ephemera,” oral histories)**. There are different ways that experiences can be documented and shared besides written records.

For example, The **People’s Archive of Police Violence in Cleveland** is a non-institutional community archive collecting stories of encounters with law enforcement. It is doing so by recording oral histories, collecting community organizing documents, and openly inviting online contributions in diverse formats and perspectives. In recognition of the specific risks to its community, it deliberately avoids collecting provenance and identifying information from contributors.



## Resources on Community Archiving Ethics

Michelle Caswell, *Toward a survivor-centered approach to records documenting human rights abuse: lessons from community archives.*

M. Caswell, M. Cifor, and M.H. Ramirez, ["To Suddenly Discover Yourself Existing": Uncovering the Impact of Community Archives.](#)

Terry Cook, *Evidence, memory, identity, and community; four shifting archival paradigms.*

Jarrett M. Drake, [#ArchivesForBlackLives: Building a Community Archives of Police Violence in Cleveland.](#)

April Hathcock, [Opening Up the Margins.](#)

T-Kay Sangwand, [Decolonizing Archival Practice & Diversifying the Historical Record Through Post-Custodial Human Rights Archiving.](#) [Presentation]

Here are more resources. The first three articles provide useful frameworks for thinking about community archiving. Next, Jarrett Drake, an advising archivist on the People's Archive of Police Violence, discusses *how* we create archives without re-traumatizing communities or subjecting them to an oppressive gaze. April Hathcock's wide ranging article talks about creating openness and cites numerous examples. And T-Kay Sangwand's talk outlines the philosophy and practice of post-custodianship.



## In Closing

- Responsibilities to:
  - Content creators
  - Individuals and communities represented or affiliated with collections.
  - Users, current and future
  - Home organization or collecting institution
  - Co-workers and peers
- Attentive to:
  - Not be a one-size-fits-all approach.
  - Inequalities in power, where we/our institutions are situated.
  - Confronting instead of reproducing existing social imbalances and injustices.

In closing, we've discussed a wide range of content - content that is questionably acquired and culturally sensitive, social media, content that is offensive, and community-owned content. Hopefully it has been useful to discuss specific examples rather than talk more conceptually about ethics. In all of the scenarios, the considerations have centered around the people we are responsible to, including:

Content creators.

Individuals and communities represented or affiliated with collections.

Users, current and future.

Home organization or collecting institution.

Co-workers and peers.

Sometimes we have to make hard decisions. In doing so, it is important to keep in mind that there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Our choices need to be made in context, knowing where we are situated and recognizing existing inequalities of power.

Ultimately, we can only try our best. What is important is that we don't shy away from making ethical choices or passively perpetuate social injustices, but that we confront problems and move forward.



# Questions & Feedback

On parts 1 & 2



# Thank you!

Jessica Bitely – [preservation@nedcc.org](mailto:preservation@nedcc.org)

Yvonne Ng – [yvonne@witness.org](mailto:yvonne@witness.org)



## Images – Part 1

- Slide 9: “Graduation 1975” Courtesy of Robbins Library, Arlington, MA and “Boylston Street” – Courtesy of Boston Public Library; Prints Department – both found through Digital Commonwealth
- Slide 10: “Silos. Beltsville, Maryland.” From the New York Public Library’s public domain image collection
- Slide 17: “Grenades” – by Chenspec - wikimedia commons C-SA; Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals - symbols for combustibles/explosives
- All other images in Part 1: NEDCC