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# Designing and Sustaining an Institutional Archives

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SHAKER HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM, SHAKER HEIGHTS, OHIO

# Introductions

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# Overview

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Shaker Historical Society's Institutional Archives Project



Records Management



User-Centered Design



Legal Considerations



Sustaining Special Projects



Truth and Consequences in practice and in institutional collections



# About the Shaker Historical Society

- Founded in 1947 to share and preserve the story of North Union Shakers
- Located in the 1910 Myers Mansion
- First employee with museum studies and collections training hired in 1992
- 3 full-time employees





# Project Background

- 75th anniversary in 2022
- Records found in basement
- Needed grant that would be manageable for a small museum with limited staff
  - Ohio Historical Records Advisory Board (OHRAB)





# Phase I: Establish Institutional Archives

- 35 cubic feet of documents
- 200 Hours (summer 2023)
- Goals:
  - Gain an understanding
  - Process:
    - Arrangement
    - Description





# Gain an Understanding

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## OF THE COLLECTION

- Collection Review/Inventory
  - Creators and their records
    - Who, What, Where
  - Preservation/Access Concerns
  - Collection management needs
- Why
  - Inform Arrangement, Description, and Access (Meissner, 2019)

## OF THE USERS

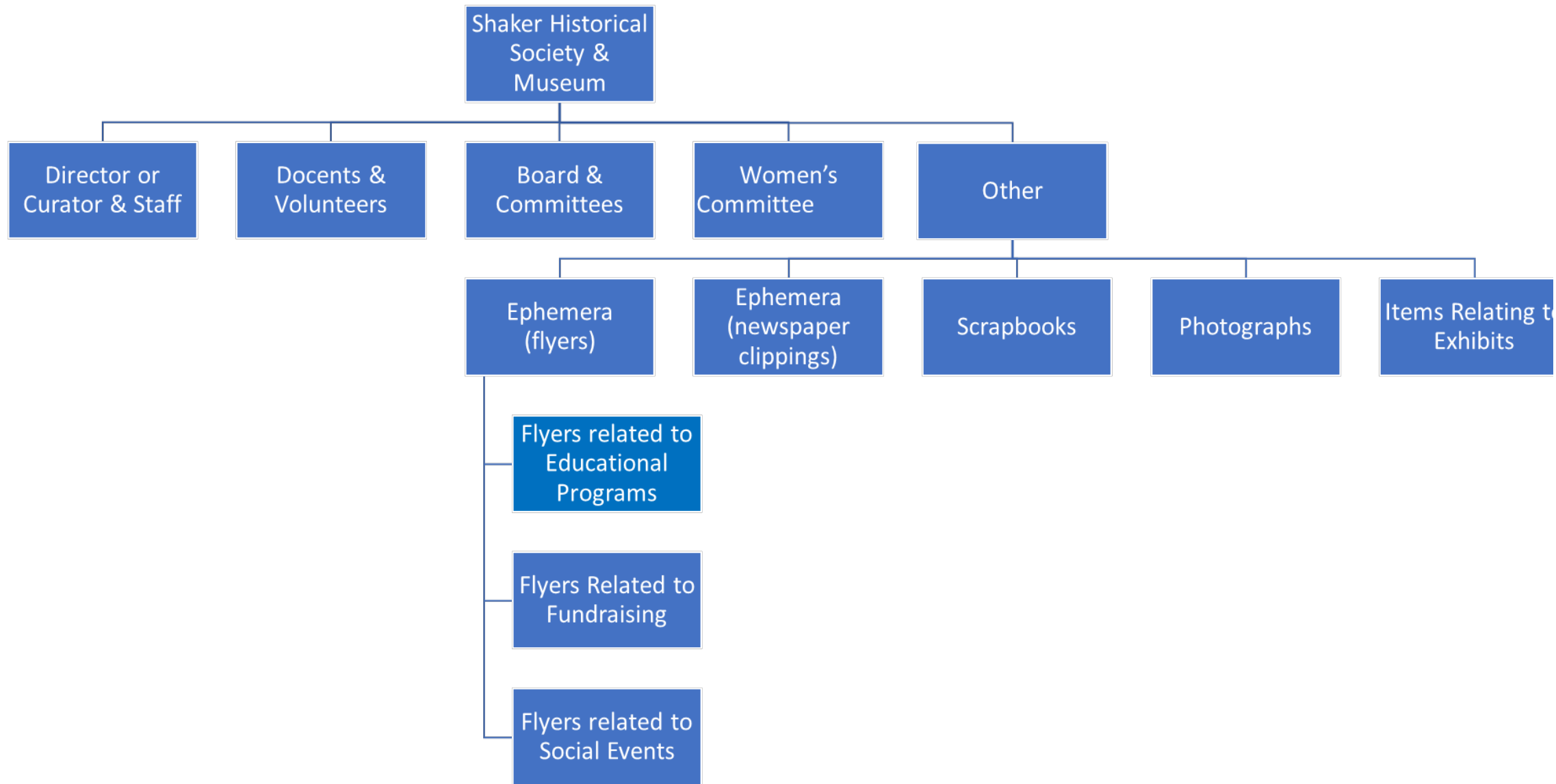
- Interviewed staff
- Reviewed website
- Reviewed annual reports
- Why
  - Facilitate access
  - User-centered arrangement and description



Box #	File #	Creating Body	Date Range	General Type	Specific Type	Preservation/
3		Board of Education from SHSD	1960s		9 folders	
3	28	news outlets	1960s		news articles related to local government and the city of Shaker Heights	acidic news m
3	29	city of Shaker Heights	1960s		copies of ordinances, reports, tax forms	
3	30	city of Lakewood and Cleveland	1960s		copies of articles; ordinances and pamphlets	
3	31	city of Shaker Heights	1962; 1996		voter tallies from governor and county auditor elections	
3	32	Oberlin College Inn	n.d.			
3	33	SHS: Board and Subcommittees	1990	newsletter; roster; eph	newsletter; rosters; planned events	PII in rosters;
3	34	SHS: Other	2002-2005	Ephemera: flyers	tours; presentations; apple fest	
3	35	SHS: director and staff; Other	2001-2002	Presentation; Ephemera	presentation; apple fest (harvest fest)	
3	36	SHS: Other	1958-2002	Ephemera: flyers and n	mostly flyers and news articles on a wide range of programs and events; some meeting minutes	
3	37	Outside body	2008	articles	"collection research"	
3	38	SHS: Other	1978-1996	exhibits; ephemera: flye	notes and flyers relating to exhibits	
3	39	SHS: Other	2011-2013	Ephemera: flyers	flyers for events and exhibits	
3	40	SHS: Other	2017	Exhibits	signs, notes, and CD on exhibit "Above Stairs: domestic Service in Shaker Heights"	
3	41	SHS: Other	n.d.	Exhibits	signs from exhibit on Thomas Sheraton; about Shaker furniture	
3	42	SHS: Other	2018	Ephemera: flyers	Caring for your collections Workshop	
3	43	SHS	1930s	maps		
3	44	SHS: Other	2014-2018	Exhibits	exhibit inventories	









# Dual Approach

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## ARCHIVES

(MEISSNER, 2018; GREENE, 1998)



## RECORDS MANAGEMENT

(ISO 15489-1)



## USER-CENTERED DESIGN

(CLARKE, 2018; BATTARBEE ET AL, 2014)

# Results: Phase I

- 200 hours
- 77% of institutional records processed
- Identified creating bodies and series
- 2 boxes of records to other local archives
- 1 box of records recovered and transferred to special collections
- 1 Collection-level [DACS Finding aid](#)





# Phase II: Sustain Institutional Archives

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Policies

Continuity Documentation

Improve Usability

Advocacy, Education, & Outreach







# Policies

- F. Gerald Ham (1993). *Selecting and appraising archives and manuscripts*.
- Collection Development Policy: External Acquisitions
  - Target record gaps
  - Guide donations : “we want”, “we may consider”, “we do not accept”
- Records Retention Schedule : Internal Acquisitions
  - Address legal considerations
  - Allow consistent, systematic growth



# Continuity Documentation

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- Inventory
- DACS finding aid
- Policies
- Future project ideas
- Cataloging conventions for sub-groups and series
- Guidance on measuring extent
- Additional guidance on handling emails

# CMS for Usability

- Beyond the text finding aid  
(Daniels & Yakel, 2010)
- Beyond the hierarchy  
(Daines & Nimer, 2011; Zhang 2012)
- Avoid information silo
- Needs of the User  
(Walton, 2017)
- Catalog-It
  - Access by creating body
  - Access by search function
  - United search capabilities

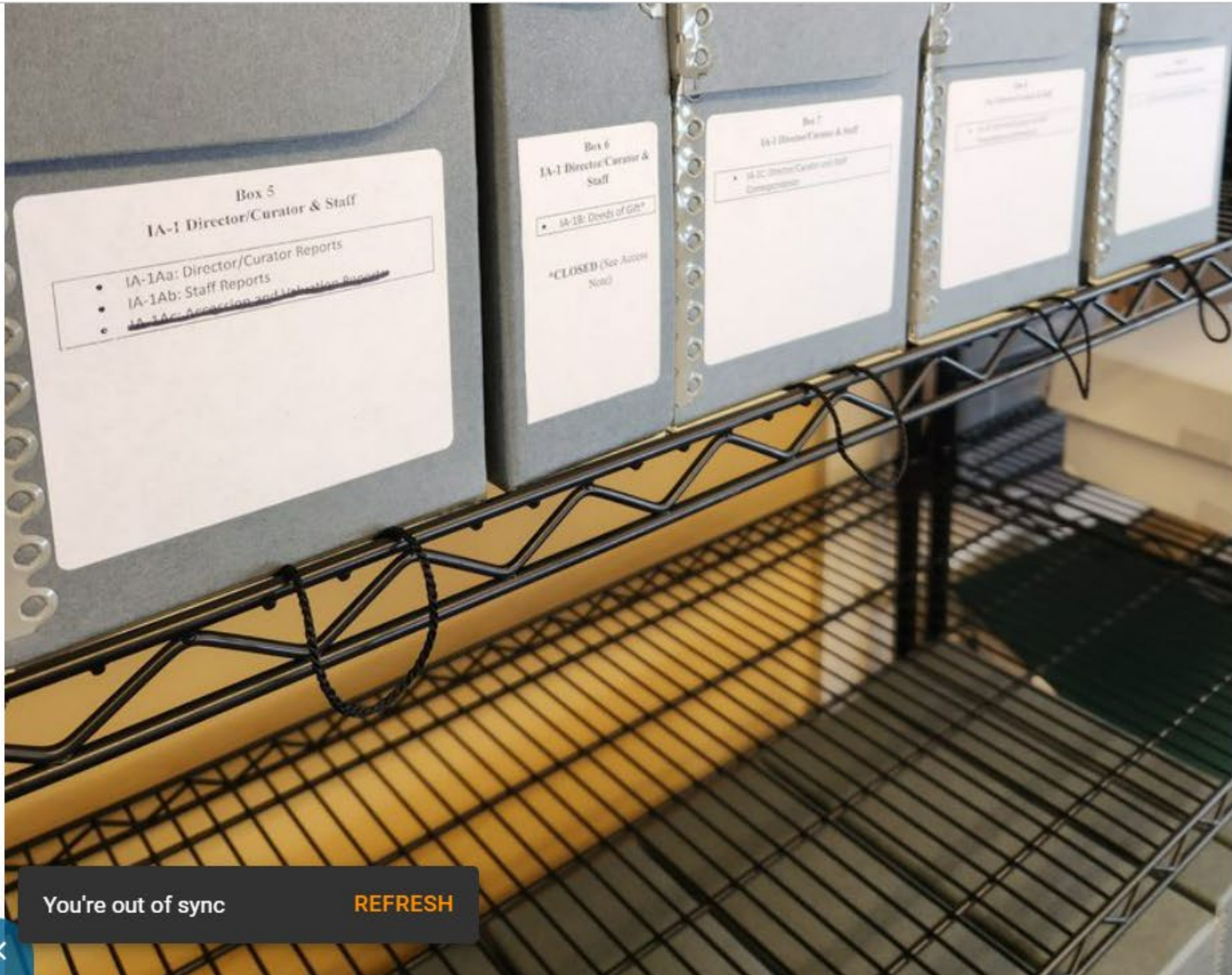
- Required DACS elements that do not need to be repeated (described already in collection-level finding aid with no changes at lower level)
  - Reference Code
  - Name & Location of Repository
- Required DACS elements to use → Catalog-It Equivalent
  - Title → “Name/Title”
  - Date → under Archive Details
  - Extent → under Archive Details “archives size/extent”
  - Name of Creators → under Archive Details “creator”
  - Scope & Content → Scope and Content
  - Conditions governing access → under Archive Details “restrictions”
  - Languages & Scripts → under Archive Details
  - Rights Statement → “Copyright” (doesn’t technically NEED repeated; maybe just list SHS as the Copyright Holder)
  - Relationship to top level has to be communicated → was thinking of doing this using the “Collection” element and creating a tag for the institutional archives; all other entries and the entry for the collection-level finding aid could also use this tag to link everything together
- Optional Catalog-It elements that I’d like to also use (not DACS required elements)
  - Inventory
  - Archive Item details (this could be the container list)





# Shaker Historical Society Director/Curator & Staff Records

Archive



Creator Date(s) of Creation  
Elizabeth Nord Theodora Angelone 1956 - 2019

Suzanne Toomey Christine Shaw

Jo Caress Mercier Robinson

Mary Taylor Orrin Judith Chelnick

Virginia Atkinson Jean R. Hudson

Maxine Jaqman Muriel Nachman

Cathi Winans Sabine Kretzschmar

John Klassen April Kay Post Ann Cicarella

Dr. Ware Petznick Brianna Treleven

Archive Size/Extent  
1.71 cubic feet

Restrictions  
Deeds of Gift (IA-1B) are restricted to use by internal staff and board members only.

Primary Language  
English

### Archive Items Details

Title	Description	Creator
Director/Curator & Staff Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• File 1: Director/Curator Reports 1957-1959 (IA-1Aa)</li> <li>• File 2: Director/Curator Reports 1960-1969 (IA-1Aa)</li> <li>• File 3: Director/Curator Reports 1970-1979 (IA-1Aa)</li> </ul>	Director/Curator Staff

You're out of sync REFRESH











# Collection Today

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- Quick access to records documenting decisions and thought processes — Learn from the past!
- Good stewards of organization's history
- Access for staff, board, and public
- Recent uses:
  - Endowment research
  - Institutional photographs
  - Cleveland Historical article research



# Truth and Consequences

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- Uncovering history and evidence of activities, good and bad
  - Lack of women in leadership
  - Lack of diversity
  - Romanticization of local history
- Grappling with decades-long organizational issues
- Moving forward in accountability, transparency, and good stewardship

# Conclusion



Consider the records we create



Consider what sustains a solution



Consider the user





# Resources

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- *ARMA International*. (2009). *GARP: Generally Accepted Recordkeeping Principles*. <https://www.armavi.org/docs/garp.pdf>
- *ARMA International*. (2013). ARMA International' Information Governance Maturity Model.
- Battarbee, K., Suri, J. F., & Howard, S. G. (2014). Empathy on the Edge. *IDEO News*, 1–14. Microsoft Design. Available at <https://www.microsoft.com/design/inclusive/>
- Clarke, R. I. (2018). Toward a design epistemology for librarianship. *The Library Quarterly*, 88(1), 41–59. <https://doi.org/10.1086/694872>
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- Daines, J. G. III & Nimer, C. L. (2011). Re-imagining archival display: Creating user-friendly finding aids. *Journal of Archival Organization* 9(4), 4-31.
- Greene. (1998). “The Surest Proof:” A Utilitarian Approach to Appraisal. *Archivaria*, 45(45), 127–169.

# Resources (Continued)

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- Ham, F. Gerald. (1993). *Selecting and appraising archives and manuscripts*. Chicago, Ill.: Society of American Archivists.
- ISO 15489-1: 2001 (E). Information and Documentation -- Records Management. Part 1: General.
- Meissner, D. (2019). *Arranging and describing archives and manuscripts*. The Society of American Archivists.
- National Archives and Records Administration. (2023). Current GRS and Related FAQs. <https://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/grs.html>
- Ohio History Connection. (n.d.). Email Management Decision Tree. <https://das.ohio.gov/static/buying-selling/state-printing-and-mail-services/records-management/Email%20Management%20Flowchart.pdf>
- Ohio History Connection (OHC). (2023). Local Retention Schedules and Forms. <https://www.ohiohistory.org/research/local-government-records-program/local-retention-schedules-forms/#rc>
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# Resources (Continued)

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- Society of American Archivists (2015). *Confidentiality of Private Information Held in Public Records*. [https://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/Privacy%20Issue%20Brief%20June%2025%202015\\_2.pdf](https://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/Privacy%20Issue%20Brief%20June%2025%202015_2.pdf)
- Society of Human Resource Management. (n.d.) *Federal Record Retention Requirements*. <https://rrhrpa.shrm.org/sites/rrhrpa.shrm.org/files/Federal%20Record%20Retention%20Requirements.pdf>
- Walton. (2017). Looking for Answers: A Usability Study of Online Finding Aid Navigation. *The American Archivist*, 80(1), 30–52. <https://doi.org/10.17723/0360-9081.80.1.30>
- Zhang, J. (2012) Archival Representation in the Digital Age, *Journal of Archival Organization*, 10:1, 45-68, DOI: 10.1080/15332748.2012.677671

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# Thank You

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