

# Accessioning a New Manuscript or Archival Collection (LTS Procedure #78)

**Scope:** *This is the procedure that RMC staff use to accession a new manuscript or archival collection. The purpose of accessioning is to get an initial sense of what is in the collection, make preliminary decisions on retention and level of processing, and create records of its existence and origin (the accession folder and preliminary catalog record) that will allow us to track it until it can be processed. Appraisal, accessioning in Voyager, and distribution of material are commonly done by the curator or the Technical Services Archivist.*

**Contact:** [Margaret Nichols](#)

**Unit:** RMC

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[Initial Appraisal and Accessioning](#)

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## A. Initial Appraisal and Accessioning

1. Receive the collection.
2. Appraise the collection; make a preliminary list. Number the containers in the collection (e.g. box 1 of 10, box 2 of 10, etc.).
3. Create an accession folder with the collection name on it. Include in the folder any correspondence and information relating to the collection or its acquisition.
4. Search Voyager for a record. If the collection or item was a purchase, a record may have been created when it was ordered.
5. Curators: fill out an [Accession Worksheet Form](#) for the collection and send it to the people designated on the form. After that, you can skip to step 9.
6. Accessioning staff: Enter an accession record for the collection in ArchivesSpace. This includes a (preliminary) statement of the extent of the collection (preferably in cubic feet), its date range, a brief description of its scope and content, and agents such as the source and the creator of the collection. After you save the accession record, add an event to indicate that you accessioned it. For details, see the documentation in Box ([cornell.box.edu](http://cornell.box.edu)).
7. Accessioning staff: Use the online accession book (Accession Book, in the RMC folder on the shared X: drive) to determine and enter the collection number. Then, spawn a resource record from the accession record in ArchivesSpace. Enter the collection number as the resource's identifier. Also, add notes (including the preferred citation for the collection), subject headings (including form or genre terms), and create an instance for each unprocessed container in the collection.
8. Write the collection number on the accession folder, and on the containers (boxes etc.).
9. Curators: If the collection is a gift, write an acknowledgment letter to the donor; send a copy to Library Alumni Affairs and Development, and file a copy in the accession folder and another in the chronological file in the RMC front office. Have the donor sign a memo of understanding. University Archives collections: have the donor office fill out a transfer report. Give the memo/report to staff to put in the accession folder.
10. The processing Collections Assistant will record the boxes' temporary locations in their instance records (attached to the resource record) in ArchivesSpace. Once the stacks Collections Assistant has assigned permanent box locations, she will update the box locations.
13. For a Human Sexuality collection, a designated RMC staff member or student assistant will add the new collection to the list of manuscript collections in the Human Sexuality Collection guide.

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## B. Distribution of Material, Rehousing, and Preliminary Processing

1. Distribute any unwanted material as appropriate. Some may be discarded. Identify items (usually publications) to be kept in RMC or the Library but separated from the collection; these may need to be listed by staff before they are separated and the list made part of the collection's finding aid in ArchivesSpace.
2. Note down what material (if any) can be sent to the Annex and what should be kept in RMC.
3. Technical services staff rehouse the material according to instructions in the curator's notes. This may include some refoldering and shifting of material. Staff handle the items designated to be separated from the collection (list them if required, and give published material to be cataloged individually to an RMC book cataloger).
4. Consult the Assistant Director for Technical Services & Curator of Digital and Media Collections about the proper housing for visual materials. Consult the Digital Archivist about digitizing any audiovisual materials in the collection.
5. As you go through the collection, compile at least a preliminary box list in Excel. Print out a copy of the list for the accession folder, then e-mail the list as an attachment to a Collections Assistant for use in creating the finding aid in ArchivesSpace. Be sure to specify the collection number.

6. Let the stacks Collections Assistant know when the collection is ready for her to assign box locations. If the collection is large, she may find a temporary location for the boxes while they await processing, and assign the temporary locations to the boxes in ArchivesSpace.