

Endangered Archives Programme Guidelines for producing surveys

1 Rationale

The Endangered Archives Programme awards Pilot Project grants for researchers to investigate the survival of archival collections on a particular subject, in a discrete region, or in a specific format and to determine upon the feasibility of their future recovery through a Major Project. As part of the Pilot Project, researchers will normally be undertaking a survey of the material under investigation and the results of this survey should be submitted as part of the final output. The survey should aim to provide a broad overview of the content and context of the material. It should gather basic information on the location(s), extent, format, physical condition, provenance, interrelationships and administrative or biographical context of the material.

2 Information gathering and organisation

Surveys should be used to gather information in a systematic and consistent way. You should use it as a means not just to list the material, but also to collect information on the context and background of the material. You need to collect information on the material itself (what and how much), its context (administrative/biographical background), its physical condition, and its ownership (provenance). The survey should also look for an existing order, or impose one which, where possible, respects the order in which the material would have been maintained by the original owner.

When organising the information you have collected, please consider how this information will be used in the future. If the material is to be the subject of a major project you should familiarise yourself with the EAP Listing Guidelines.

3 Format of your survey

Do not use the EAP Listing Guidelines as a guide for your survey. The Listing Guidelines give instruction for listing material that has been copied and are based on archival cataloguing standards. Although there will be similarities, the information collected during your survey will naturally be of a different type and focus. Your survey should aim to increase your overall knowledge of the material, its scope and physical condition, and its arrangement. More detailed descriptions such as that required by the Listing Guidelines are more appropriately (and more easily) carried out at a later stage.

Your surveys should be designed to allow you to collect information relevant to the material being surveyed (see section 4). This information should be gathered in a way that best suits your project. This may take the form of a database, printed forms, word

documents or spreadsheets. Please note however that the final surveys should be submitted either as word documents or excel spreadsheets (see section 5).

The information collected should be formatted in a way that makes interpretation of the data easy and meaningful. It should be organised by provenance or collection. The information elements should be clearly marked. Examples of information elements include details about the scope and content (description) of the material, titles of individual manuscripts, files, etc., dates, extent, language, physical format and physical condition.

4 Content of your survey

The survey should include a description of your survey method. This should contain an explanation of how much material you expect to include in the survey, its physical storage conditions, the geographical areas to be covered (if relevant) and the criteria used to sort through the material and order the survey.

Your surveys should collect information relevant to the material being surveyed. For example, material belonging to family collections may contain a wide variety of material with different physical types (for example, manuscripts, photographs, videos). Your survey will need to note the different types of material, giving details such as the type of paper used, manuscript binding, photographic method, etc. Material from political, religious or other organised groups may have complex administrative backgrounds and functions which will need to be included in the survey. If you are surveying material currently kept in different locations or in collections from different geographical areas, your survey will need to identify these different locations and areas. It will need to collect information that ties the material being surveyed to the area and to the owners. It will also need to explain the relationship between the items/collections being surveyed.

Grant holders are in a unique position to collect vital contextual information which will be important for assessing the value and scope of the material. Administrative and/or biographical details about the collection(s) and its creators and/or collectors should be gathered where possible. Interrelationships between the materials surveyed should be explained. For example, material created by organisations that have undergone re-structuring or name-changes may have complex interrelations. Another example of interrelated material is correspondence between individuals from two separate family collections.

You should also record whether the individual or organisation holding the material is interested and willing to be involved in a future Major Project. You will need to note who has current ownership of the material and associated rights (for example, copyright). You should also identify a principal contact for each set of material.

Further advice regarding the content of your surveys is available from the EAP Curator.

5 Submitting the final surveys

Your surveys should be submitted to the EAP office at the end of your project. They may be in the form of a word document or excel spreadsheet. Do not send survey results in databases as these may be difficult for us to access. If you have collected your survey information using a database, the database tables can be cut and pasted into excel spreadsheets and submitted in this format.

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