

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
January 23 – 26, 2014
Chicago, Illinois**

**Standards Committee: Proposal for SAA-ACRL/RBMS Joint
Task Force on the Development of Standardized Holdings
Counts and Measures for Archival Repositories and
Special Collections Libraries**

(Prepared by Meg Tuomala, Standards Committee)

The Standards Committee recommends approval of a proposal for creation of a SAA-Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL)/Rare Books and Manuscripts Section (RBMS) Joint Task Force for the Development of Standardized Holdings Counts and Measures for Archival Repositories and Special Collections Libraries. The idea originated with RBMS, was carried forward by a liaison from RBMS to SAA (Martha Conway), and was proposed for SAA approval by the SAA Manuscript Repositories Section. The proposal (Appendix A) follows SAA's standards development procedures.

Should the proposal be approved, a draft description for the group, prepared by the RBMS liaison and Standards Committee co-chairs, is provided for consideration and approval (Appendix B).

BACKGROUND

There is no standard for quantifying holdings of archival repositories and special collections libraries. A key finding of *Taking Our Pulse: The OCLC Research Survey of Special Collections and Archives* (2010)¹ was the lack of established metrics for counting collection material. It called for the development and promulgation of metrics that enable standardized measurement of key aspects of special collections use and management.

The RBMS Task Force on Metrics and Assessment² was established in 2012 to examine current practices for gathering and reporting information to demonstrate the value and impact of special collections and archives. One action item in its June 2013 final report³ was a "motion to charge an appropriate member of the RBMS Executive Committee or delegate to initiate contact with appropriate SAA leaders...regarding the formation of a joint ACRL/RBMS-SAA task force to develop a series of metrics and corresponding

¹ <http://oclc.org/content/dam/research/publications/library/2010/2010-11.pdf>

² http://www.rbms.info/committees/task_force/metrics_assessment/

³ http://www.rbms.info/committees/task_force/metrics_assessment/metrics_final_report.pdf

definitions for counting special collections and archival materials to complement the generalized collection metrics in the annual ARL statistical survey.”

DISCUSSION

The Standards Committee recommends this proposal because of the void in standardized holdings counts and measures and the potential to develop metrics that could foster confidence in local data gathering practices, facilitate meaningful comparisons among institutions and across the community at large, and enable a culture of assessment and the demonstration of value. Furthermore, the metrics would be relevant to a variety of repositories that collect unique research materials.

Standardized holdings counts and measures have the potential to go beyond simply tallying up the extent of our holdings and get at the operational capacity and *significance* of archives and special collections.

Additionally, individual repositories will gain the confidence of knowing that their local data gathering practices are informed by and meet national standards. The metrics will be accompanied by guidelines designed to help repositories gather statistics pertaining to their holdings and analyze the data in meaningful ways to support collection management, assessment, and development initiatives.

Furthermore, the metrics will allow repositories to demonstrate locally that stakeholders are well served or identify gaps, weaknesses, and areas for improvement. They will also facilitate meaningful analyses and comparisons across multiple repositories and the archival community.

Having contributed to or consulted the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) annual statistical reports, we know they are problematic. They do not provide standard guidance or definitions, yet the results are reported in a comparative framework. By partnering with ACRL/RBMS, we will have greater weight with ARL in instituting a new set of use metrics. Indeed, members of ACRL/RBMS have maintained contact with ARL and its program for Statistics and Assessment and Special Collections Working Group.

To the extent deemed possible and mutually desirable, the Task Force will coordinate the development of the standard with the International Council on Archives (ICA) and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) Subcommittee on Quality - Statistics and performance evaluation (TC464/SC8),⁴ which is currently reviewing a proposal to create an international archives standard for the description of archival repositories similar to ISDIAH, the International Standard for Describing Institutions with Archival Holdings, promulgated by ICA.⁵ Preliminary contact with the incoming

⁴ ISO TC464/SC8 is “currently assessing the forthcoming revision to the ISO standard on International library statistics (ISO 2789) for areas where the standards can be better aligned and for proposed new statistics and methods”; see:

http://www.niso.org/news/pr/view?item_key=4bab6c0503ed5d9f392f862e9d32ce346eef6c69.

⁵ See: <http://www.ica.org/?lid=10198>.

chair of TC464/SC8 by members of the recent ACRL/RBMS Task Force on Metrics and Assessment has suggested possibilities for collaboration since the two standards are likely to be complementary rather than overlapping.⁶

We should note that the RBMS Task Force on Metrics and Assessment had four final recommendations, of which this is one. A second, on metrics for public services, is also on the agenda for this Council meeting (see 0114-III-C-StdsComm-UserMetrics). A third, on primary source literacy/teaching, may be proposed to the Standards Committee in 2014. Approval of more than one of these proposals may stretch SAA's bandwidth, but we think that SAA can find the capacity to manage multiple groups working on significant standards development projects such as this.

RECOMMENDATIONS

THAT a SAA-ACRL/RBMS Joint Task Force on the Development of Standardized Holdings Counts and Measures for Archival Repositories and Special Collections Libraries be established; and

THAT the description of the SAA-ACRL/RBMS Joint Task Force on the Development of Standardized Holdings Counts and Measures for Archival Repositories and Special Collections Libraries be approved.

Support Statement: The Task Force will develop a standard for quantifying holdings of archival repositories and special collections libraries and prepare this standard for approval and adoption by both SAA and ACRL/RBMS. The benefits of having standardized metrics for quantifying holdings are numerous and include fostering confidence in local data gathering practices, facilitating meaningful comparisons among institutions and across the community at large, and enabling a culture of assessment and the demonstration of value. SAA participation in the development of this standard will fill a deficiency in how these basic statistical measures are gathered.

Relation to Strategic Plan: The Task Force will address the Society's Strategic Goals of providing content, via education and publications, that reflects the latest thinking and best practices in the field (2.1); identifying the need for new standards, guidelines, and best practices and lead or participate in their development (3.1); actively participating in relevant partnerships and collaborations to enhance professional knowledge (3.3); and creating opportunities for members to participate in SAA (4.2).

Fiscal Impact: The Task Force will require meeting space at the SAA Annual Meeting. Funding for the work of the Task Force is neither requested nor anticipated; its description is written to negate the need for financial support.

⁶ Incoming chair TC464/SC8 Steve Hiller had several email exchanges and a conference call with ACRL/RBMS Task Force on Metrics and Assessment co-chair Martha Conway and member Christian Dupont in October 2013. For background on the ACRL/RBMS Task Force on Metrics and Assessment including its final report see: http://rbms.info/committees/task_force/metrics_assessment/index.shtml

Proposal from the Manuscript Repositories Section

Submitted on Wednesday, November 6, 2013 - 8:59am

Submitted by user: tzachar

Submitted values are:

Proposal type: Development of a new SAA standard

--Contact Information--

Name of submitting group: Manuscript Repositories Section

Date submitted: November 6, 2013

--Contact Person--

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Title of Standard: Collection Metrics for Archives and Special Collections

Type of Standard: Convention and/or Rules

Topic(s): Administration and Management

Description of Standard:

Archivists and special collections librarians are becoming increasingly mindful of (1) the need to gather, analyze, and share evidence concerning the value of the collections we hold, the effectiveness of the operations we manage, and the impact of the services we provide and (2) the absence of commonly accepted definitions, metrics, guidelines, and best practices to enable, guide, and inform the meaningful assessment of our collections, operations, and services.

In a paper summarizing the outcomes of the 2009 OCLC Research survey of 275 North American research libraries regarding the current status of their special collections and archives, Jackie Dooley notes, "We were not surprised that the data confirmed a lack of established metrics for measuring special collections circumstances." In addition to limiting the collecting,

analyzing, and comparing of information across the research library community, the absence of established metrics – for counting collection material, characterizing users and use, and assessing cataloging, processing, digitization, and other activities – means that special collections libraries and archives find it difficult if not impossible to measure themselves against community norms and to demonstrate locally that primary constituencies are being well served.

In keeping with the first of thirteen recommendations emanating from the OCLC Research survey – “establish and promulgate metrics for the standardized measurement of key measures” – we are proposing the development of guidelines or a standard that would consist of definitions and metrics for counting the wide range of collection material held in special collections and archives. These could be used in a variety of ways, including as a complement to the ARL Statistics and the ACRL Academic Library Trends and Statistics Survey and as both a foundation and a launch pad for institutions that wish to engage in archival and other collections assessment activity. The benefits of having standardized metrics for quantifying our collections are numerous and include fostering confidence in local data gathering practices, facilitating meaningful comparisons among institutions and across the community at large, and enabling a culture of assessment and the demonstration of value.

The definitions and metrics will be formulated so that they are relevant to and useful for all types of institutions, including archival repositories, special collections libraries, historical societies, independent research libraries -- essentially any institution that provides supervised or mediated access to collections of unique, rare, primary source, and other material. Although the content and the format of the standard will be determined by the leadership of the task force that is appointed to develop it, we suggest that two resources in particular will prove to be very useful in the development of the guidelines, definitions, and metrics of which it will consist: the work of the ACRL/RBMS Task Force on Metrics & Assessment (in particular the work of “Group 1,” which had “collections” as its activity domain) and the instrument (in particular the lists of types of material) that was used to collect the data for the 2009 OCLC Research survey.

References:

ACRL/RBMS Task Force on Metrics & Assessment. “Final Report.” 14 June 2013.

Dooley, Jackie M. “The OCLC Research Survey of Special Collections and Archives.” *Liber Quarterly* 21 (1) November 2011: 125-137.

Dooley, Jackie M. and Katherine Luce. ”Taking Our Pulse: The OCLC Research Survey of Special Collections and Archives.” Dublin, OH: OCLC Research,

2010.

Related Standards:

While related standards as such do not exist, there are glossaries and survey instruments that may inform the development of the proposed standard. These include:

- * ARL Statistics (survey instrument)
- * ACRL Academic Library Trends and Statistics (survey instrument)
- * A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology
- * OCLC Research “Taking Our Pulse” (survey instrument)
- * NISO Z39.7-2013 Information Services and Use: Metrics & Statistics for Libraries and Information Providers (data dictionary)

Although the ARL and ACRL surveys capture statistical data about collections held in archives and special collections units administered by academic libraries, they aggregate that reporting and so do not permit the comparison of that information across institutions. Additionally, while those surveys incorporate some of the definitions provided by NISO Z39.7-2013, those definitions are not sufficient for representing either the range or the depth of the collection material that is held in archives and special collections. Moreover, because they do not offer guidelines for how to collect the data, many different methods and measures are used. ARL and ACRL have both signaled their interest in having RBMS and SAA work together to develop community-based definitions and guidelines for capturing collection-related information that would complement their annual statistical surveys.

Developed by the International Council on Archives (ICA) Committee on Best Practices and Standards in 2008, the International Standard for Describing Institutions with Archival Holdings (ISDIAH) provides general rules for the standardization of descriptions of institutions with archival holdings. It does not provide any guidance or specify any definitions or metrics for collecting quantitative or qualitative data about collections, services, etc.

The proposed standard would complement the ARL and ACRL surveys and the ISDIAH, and fill a current void in definitions and guidelines for capturing and sharing collection-related information.

Related organizations for consultation and review:

This proposal is prompted by recommendations that issued from the ACRL/RBMS Task Force on Metrics & Assessment, which was charged with identifying the areas of special collections library and archival practice that would most benefit from the development of community-based metrics and assessment guidelines. The first recommendation proposes a jointly charged and jointly appointed (by ACRL/RBMS and SAA) task force to develop a standard consisting of guidelines, definitions, and metrics for counting the wide range of

collection material held in special collections and archives. Groups and organizations that have a vested and, in some cases, expressed interest in that work include:

- College & University Archives Section (SAA)
- Description Section (SAA)
- Electronic Records Section (SAA)
- Archives Management Roundtable (SAA)
- Research Libraries Roundtable (SAA)
- Standards Committee (ACRL)
- Statistics and Assessment Committee (ARL)
- Transforming Special Collections in the Digital Age Working Group (ARL)
- Subcommittee on Quality: Statistics and Performance Evaluation (TC 464/SC 8) (ISO)
- Z39.7 (Information Services and Use: Metrics & Statistics for Libraries and Information Providers) Standing Committee (NISO)

Precedents for SAA and ACRL/RBMS working together in this way include development of the ALA-SAA Joint Statement on Access: Guidelines for Access to Original Research Materials and SAA's recent endorsement of the ACRL/RBMS Guidelines Regarding Security and Theft in Special Collections and the ACRL/RBMS Guidelines for Interlibrary and Exhibition Loan of Special Collections Material.

Please find attached⁷ a copy of the final report of the ACRL/RBMS Task Force on Metrics & Assessment, which includes the recommendation, approved in July 2013 by the RBMS Executive Committee, to approach SAA about forming a joint task force that would be charged with developing guidelines or a standard that would consist of definitions and metrics for counting the wide range of collection material held in special collections and archives.

Projected timetable: Because the chair and immediate past chair of the SAA Standards Committee and the SAA Council liaison to the Standards Committee have expressed their interest in supporting this proposal, and if the proposal can be forwarded through the next stages of the review and approval process in a timely manner, then it is reasonable to expect that SAA Council could act on it during its January 2014 meeting. This would coincide well with the beginning of the 2014 committee and task force appointment process for ACRL, making it feasible that a joint task force could be appointed, charged, and ready to begin its work by July 2014. If given a typical two-year mandate, the task force could aim to have a draft standard ready for initial public hearings by the 2015 ALA Annual and SAA annual meetings. The task force could then focus on integrating feedback and soliciting additional comments from the broader community during 2014-2015, with the goal of

⁷ Note added by Standards Committee: This report is not attached here. It is available at http://www.rbms.info/committees/task_force/metrics_assessment/metrics_final_report.pdf.

presenting by July 2015 a final draft for review and approval by the appropriate ACRL and SAA committees and leadership during 2015-2016. Budgetary implications: We do not envision any particular budgetary implications associated with the development of this standard. Even though it will require the coordination of a jointly appointed task force, we expect that task force members will be able to communicate with each other electronically using equipment furnished by their local institutions or personally owned. Ideally, members will be appointed who have the financial resources at their disposal to be able to attend the annual meetings of both SAA and ALA to facilitate face-to-face meetings, but this should not be made a requirement for membership, especially if other members can host audio or video-conferencing session with their own equipment. Since drafts and documents can be shared electronically via email and free online collaboration sites, there should not be any expenses incurred for photocopying or postage. Also, since the review and approval of the standard will be managed by appointed and elected SAA members, there should not be any impact on SAA staff time.

File attachment: [link to the Final Report of the RBMS Task Force on Metrics and Assessment]

<http://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/webform/RBMS%20Task%20Force%20on%20Metrics%20%26%20Assessment%20%28Final%20Report%29.pdf>

The results of this submission may be viewed at:

<http://www2.archivists.org/node/15584/submission/14721>

**Proposed Description of the
SAA-ACRL/RBMS Joint Task Force on the Development of
Standardized Holdings Counts and Measures for
Archival Repositories and Special Collections Libraries**

I. Purpose

The SAA-ACRL/RBMS Joint Task Force on the Development of Standardized Holdings Counts and Measures for Archival Repositories and Special Collections Libraries (hereafter “Task Force”) is responsible for the development of guidelines (hereafter “Guidelines”) that will provide metrics, definitions, and best practices for quantifying the holdings of archival repositories and special collections libraries. The Guidelines will consider and address both the wide range of types and formats of material typically held--including analog, digital, and audiovisual materials--and the different ways in which collection material is managed and described. The Guidelines might also accommodate a two-tiered approach involving basic/minimum metrics and advanced/optimum metrics and/or include recommendations for institutions that wish to engage in collections assessment.

The Guidelines will be submitted to the Society of American Archivists Standards Committee (hereafter “SAA Standards”), the Association of College and Research Libraries Standards Committee (hereafter “ACRL Standards”), and the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section Executive Committee (hereafter “RBMS Exec”). The Task Force will recommend a plan for maintenance and review of the Guidelines when the Guidelines are submitted to SAA and ACRL/RBMS for approval.

II. Task Force Selection, Size, and Length of Term

The Task Force is charged for a two-year period that begins in September 2014 and continues through the 2016 SAA Annual Meeting. The Task Force may be charged for an additional year if SAA Standards, ACRL Standards, and/or RBMS Exec determine that the Guidelines need further development before they can be approved. The Task Force will include between eight and twelve members with an equal number of members appointed by SAA and ACRL according to their normal appointment procedures. A Task Force member may be a member of both organizations but will be appointed to the Task Force representing one organization only. In addition to the committee members, *ex officio* members and liaisons will be appointed by each organization according to its normal procedures.

SAA and ACRL will consider the following when appointing individuals as members of the Task Force:

- Experience managing collections in an archival repository or special collections library;
- Familiarity with the wide range of types and formats of material typically held;
- Knowledge of or involvement with the standards development process; and
- Ability to fulfill *ex officio* and/or liaison roles for SAA or ACRL.

One member appointed by each organization will be designated to serve as a Task Force co-chair. The co-chairs will be responsible for convening Task Force meetings, leading Task Force work, ensuring that deadlines are met, following procedures of their respective organizations, and communicating as needed or required with both organizations.

III. Reporting Procedures

The Task Force co-chairs will report at least semi-annually to the appropriate groups within both organizations. In conjunction with SAA Standards and RBMS Exec and in coordination with each other, the co-chairs may also schedule public hearings or conduct public comment periods or both to solicit input on draft versions of the Guidelines. The public hearings may be conducted at the SAA Annual Meeting, the midwinter or annual meeting of the American Library Association, a biennial ACRL conference, and/or the annual RBMS preconference. Public hearings may also be conducted virtually. If the Task Force is granted funding support from its parent and/or extramural organizations, the co-chairs will ensure that reporting requirements are met.

IV. Duties and Responsibilities

To fulfill its purpose as described above, the Task Force is specifically charged to:

- Develop a set of guidelines -- metrics, definitions, and best practices -- for quantifying holdings of archival repositories and special collections libraries, paying particular attention to both the wide range of types and formats of material typically held and the different ways in which collection material is managed and described.
- Ensure that the language and scope of the Guidelines are appropriate to archival repositories and special collections libraries in the United States, with due consideration given to aligning the Guidelines with terminology, definitions, and measures employed in other relevant national and international standards.
- Publicize and conduct public hearings, public comment periods, or both to ensure that members of the archives and library professions have adequate opportunities to become aware of and contribute to the development of the Guidelines.
- Follow procedures outlined in SAA's *Procedures for Review and Approval of an SAA-Developed Standard* and ACRL's *Procedures for Preparation of New Standards and Guidelines* to ensure that SAA Standards, ACRL Standards, and RBMS Exec can approve and adopt the Guidelines in a timely manner.

V. Meetings

The Task Force will carry out its charge primarily via electronic mail, conference calls, and online meetings in accordance with the meeting policies of the respective organizations. Face-to-face meetings will also be scheduled during the SAA Annual Meeting and the midwinter and annual meetings of the American Library Association, which is when ACRL/RBMS business meetings are conducted. Task Force members will be encouraged but not required to attend face-to-face meetings in person; if possible, however, the co-chairs will make arrangements for virtual participation in these meetings via conference call or online meeting software. Co-chairs will be required to attend (in person) the face-to-face meetings held during the regular meetings of their respective organizations and will be strongly encouraged to attend (in person) the face-to-face meetings of the other organization. Minutes will be prepared for each face-to-face meeting and any conference call or online meeting that meets policy definitions for a meeting, and the minutes will be posted within thirty days to the public websites of the respective organizations.