

# We Are History Keepers

Free Workshops on Preserving the  
Historical and Cultural Record of  
Our Ethnic Communities



## What to Throw Away and What to Keep

A workshop developed by  
Anne Jenner and Emily Hughes Dominick  
University of Washington Libraries Special Collections  
For We Are History Keepers  
January 30, 2021

# Let's get started

Welcome from Anne and Emily!

Today's program - an overview:

- Is archiving like spring cleaning?
- What does it mean to “keep” and what does it mean to “throw away?”
- Some lists and some format specific particulars
- How to continue learning as you work on your collections

The slides are available to view or download.

There will be a 5 minute break at 11:00



**Let's do  
a poll**

# Organizing Trends & Practices

- Downsizing
- Decluttering
- Purging
- Minimalism
- Taming the Paper Tiger
- Swedish Death Cleaning
- The Konmari Method
- Professional organizers



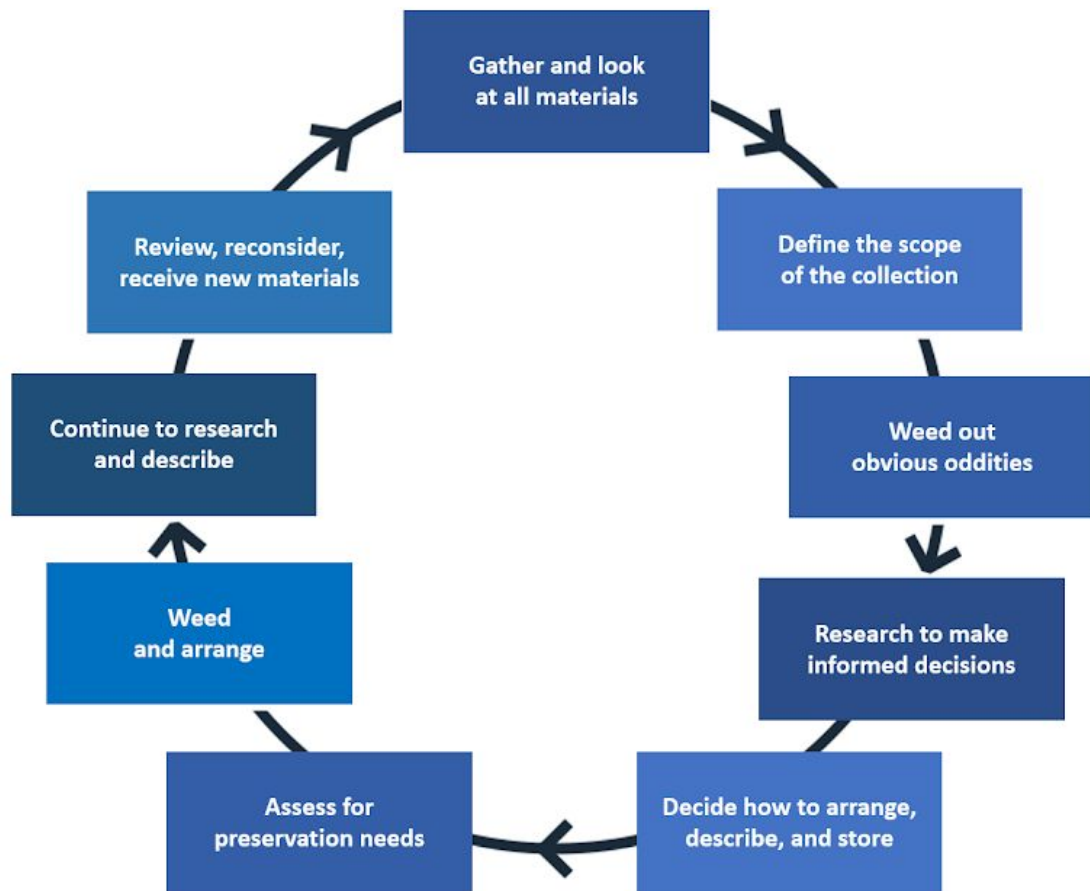
# What best describes you today?

- Discovering or rediscovering history is thrilling
- Sharing history is empowering
- It's an emotional roller coaster
- Decision making is hard

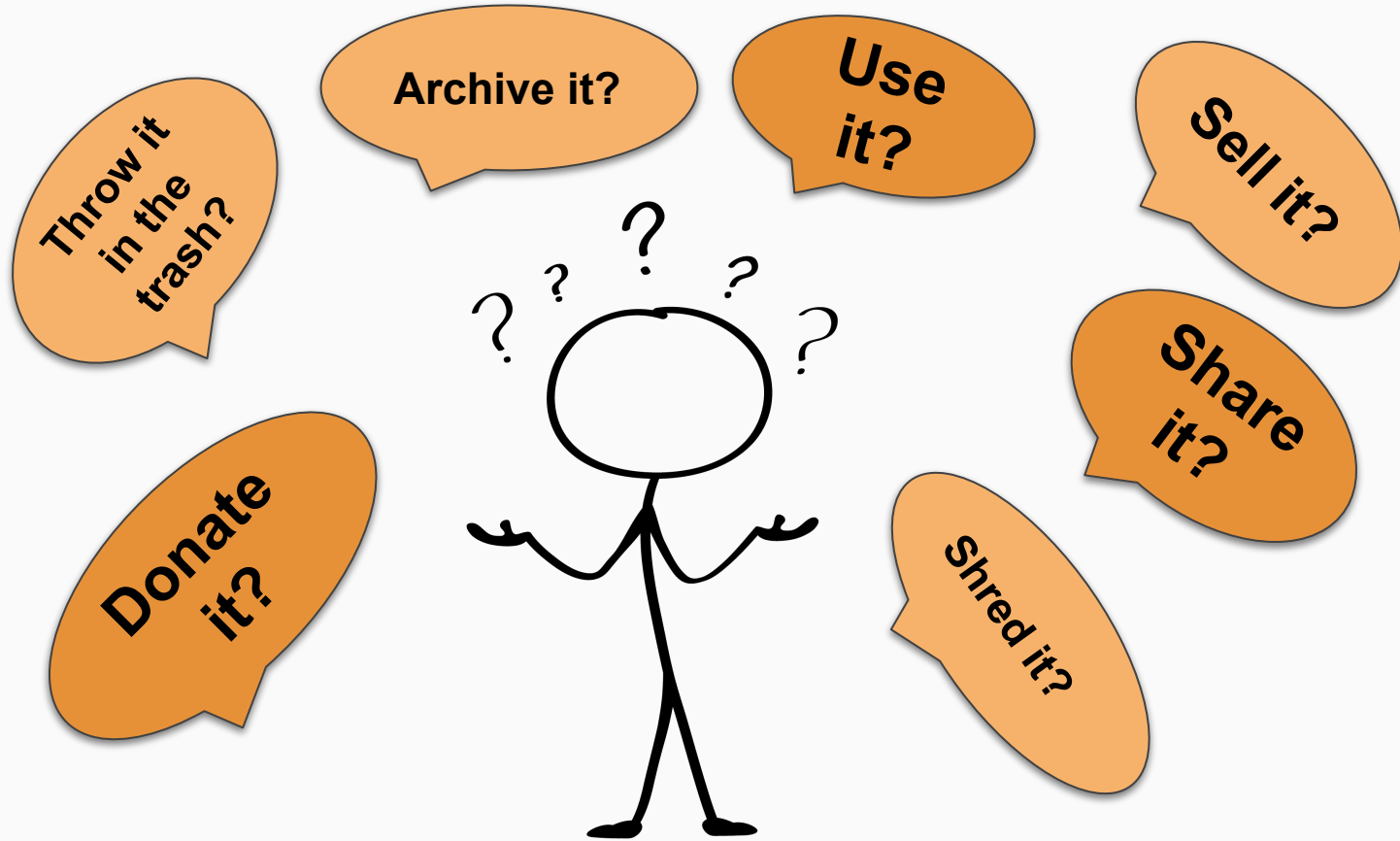


**Let's do  
a poll**

# Collecting and Archiving Cycle



# What should I do? Too many choices!



# What does it mean to “Keep” something?

- Add it to the collection
- Display it using preservation grade methods
- Make use of it

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**Let's do  
a poll**

# Key considerations for keeping

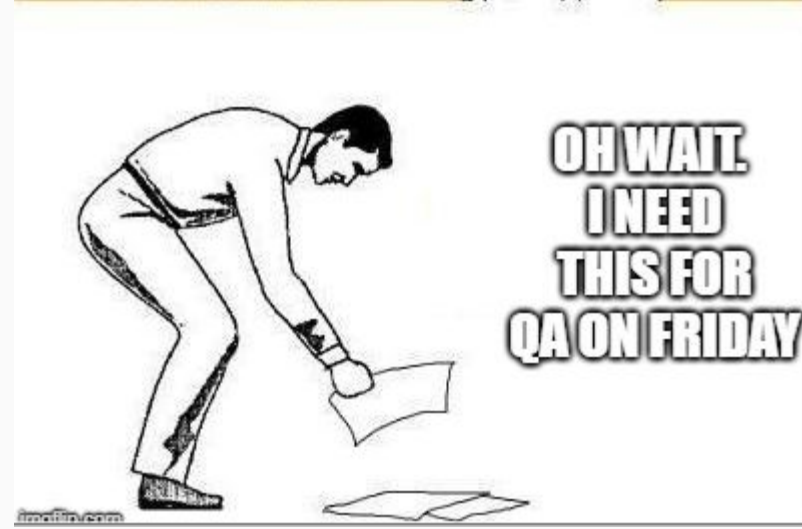
- Storage space
- Costs for upkeep and preservation
  - Housing (boxes, folders, sleeves, etc.)
  - Shelving
  - Environmental controls (air quality, light, temperature, humidity)
- Having physical control of your collections
  - Knowing where things are
- Having intellectual control of your collections
  - Knowing what you have (through inventories, guides, or descriptions)





# What does “Throw Away” mean?

- Dispose of permanently
- Relocate it in another collection  
(family or organization)
- Give to someone to freely use and enjoy - with no conditions or strings attached
- Sell
- Donate to a library or repository and allow them throw it away if they don't need it



Use it  
Archive it  
Share it  
Donate it  
Sell it  
Throw it away  
Shred it

# Questions to Help You Decide

What is the scope of the collection? What story will it tell?

Who is the collection for? Who will use it?

Do you have the necessary skills and time to keep everything?

Do you have the space and supplies needed to preserve things?

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# Questions to Help You Decide

What is the scope of your collection? What story will it tell?

- Does all the materials belong to one source or document things within the same scope or topic area?
- Can you describe the collection in a sentence or two?
- Do items you are sorting help tell the story?
- Are there things that you don't want to spend time remembering?
- Are there items that are inappropriate for you to include?
- Have you written a [collection scope statement](#)?

**Let's do  
a poll**

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# Questions to Help You Decide

## Who is the collection for? Who will use it?

- Does knowing this impact what you will and will not keep?
- How will people discover and access the collection?
- Is the collection going to be stored at home or in your organization's shared space?
- Who will have access to it?
- Are you sorting and organizing the collection to donate to a repository?
- Will you only share copies or scanned copies?

**Let's do  
a poll**

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# Questions to Help You Decide

## Do you have the necessary skills and time to keep everything?

- Are the items in good shape?
  - For example, have items sustained water damage or been exposed to damp conditions? Is there visible mold or mildew?
    - If yes, you should either
      - Seek a professional conservator immediately.
      - Throw away infected items immediately. Take photos if you can do so safely, but don't mess around with mold.
- How much can you handle? Will someone else help you sort and organize?
  - Are all collaborators on the same page on matters of what to keep and what to throw away?
- Do you need training to work with different formats, like digital, A/V, antique furniture, artwork, old photographs?

Use it  
Archive it  
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# Questions to Help You Decide

Do you have the space and supplies needed to preserve things?

- Do you have all the materials collected in one place?
- Will you receive more materials as you archive?
- Do you have enough proper physical storage space and storage materials like shelves, boxes, cabinets or other storage solutions?
- Do you have proper digital storage spaces?

# How Much to Keep

Everything?

A sampling?



# The Keep List For Archival Collections

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Let's do  
a poll



# Personal and Family Papers

## Commonly Archived Documents

- Letters/email
- Memoirs/reminiscences
- Diaries/blogs
- Scrapbooks/photo albums
- Professional papers
- Genealogical information
- Speeches/lectures
- Articles/essays
- Subject files
- Legal documents
- Minutes/reports
- Brochures and fliers
- Awards/certificates
- Photographs (with subjects and locations identified)
- Films/videos/audio tapes (including identifying information)
- Websites

# Organizational Records

## Commonly Archived Documents

- Architectural records
- Articles of incorporation, charters
- Audio recordings
- Budgets
- Bylaws and revisions
- Clippings
- Constitution and revisions
- Correspondence/email of officers
- Data sets
- Directories
- Financial statements
- Handbooks
- Legal documents
- Memoranda
- Minutes of meetings
- Membership lists
- Newsletters and other publications (created by the organization)
- Organizational charts
- Pamphlets, brochures, fliers, etc.
- Photographs
- Planning documents
- Press releases
- Reports (annual, committee, etc.)
- Rosters
- Scrapbooks
- Speeches
- Subject files
- Tax returns
- Websites/blogs/ social media content

# Learn more about Managing Organizational Records

## **We Are History Keepers – Records Management for Organizations May 22, 2021 - 10:00 am to noon**

This session will cover the basics of managing and preserving your organization's records.

- What to save and what to discard
- How and where to store records
- Digital preservation
- Records management strategies
- Costs and supplies to consider

[Register here for \*\*Records Management for Organizations!\*\*](#)

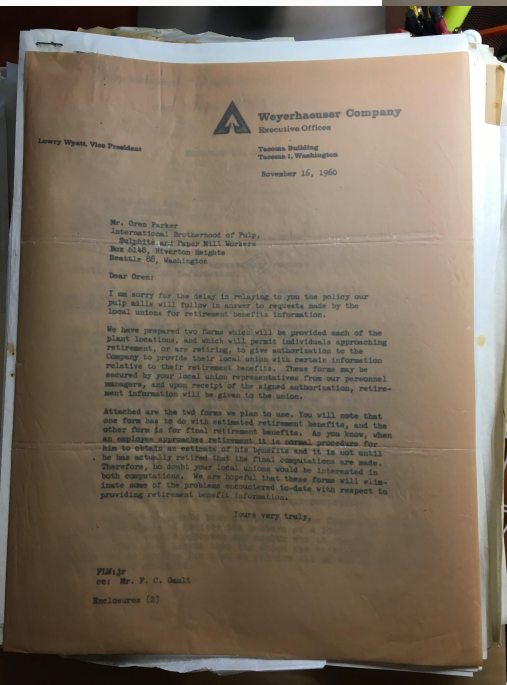
Sometimes  
formats matter

Let's do  
a poll

# Paper: How to decide?

- Is it unique or the only known copy? 😊
- Is it integral to telling the story of your family, organization, etc.? 😊
- Is it a lifecycle or “vital” record? 😊
- Is it a duplicate? 🛑
- Physical nature of the material:
  - Is it disintegrating due to poor quality? (newsprint, thermal paper (receipts, faxes)) 🛑
  - Is there mold or mildew present? 🛑

For more information about papers consult the [We Are History Keepers Workshop Guidebook](#)



# Print Photographs & Digital Photos



## Prioritize images that are described



- Photos with dates, names, and events
- Scrapbooks with descriptions
- Digital photos that have metadata
  - Arranged in computer folders with descriptive file names including, names, dates, places, events

## Avoid



- Duplicates of print photos
- Moldy and mildewed prints
- Losing descriptive information by digitizing and throwing away originals

## Tips

- Always use gloves when handling prints
- Remove photos from frames when not on display
- Store in Mylar sleeves and/or acid free folders and boxes

## Learn

- Learn about handling and care to avoid damaging photos as you explore your collection.
- Learn how to identify the type of photography in order to prepare photos for long-term preservation



# Audio Visual Materials

## Prioritize recordings that are described



- Items described with dates, names, and events
- Digital photos that have metadata
  - Arranged in computer folders with descriptive file names including, names, dates, places, events
- Keep back-ups in separate locations

## Avoid



- Moldy and mildewed reels
- Losing descriptive information by digitizing and throwing away originals

## Learn

- How handle and care for A/V recordings to avoid damaging original as you explore your collection.
- How to identify the type of media order to prepare photos for long-term preservation
- How to digitize and preserve digital files and original materials



# Learn more about Managing Audio-Visual Collections

**We Are History Keepers – Caring for and Digitizing Legacy Audio-Visual Materials**  
**March 27, 2021 - 10:00 am to noon**

- Tips and strategies for the preservation of audiovisual cassette tapes and home movies
- Storage advice
- Playback and methods/issues to consider when digitizing materials
- How to work with born digital media

[Register for \*\*Caring for and Digitizing Legacy A/V Materials\*\*](#)

# Learn more about Managing and Preserving Digital Files

## **We Are History Keepers – Managing and Preserving Digital Files February 27, 2021 - 10:00 am to noon**

Learn the basics of preserving digital materials

- Moving your files off of CD-ROMs and floppy disks
- Finding the best preservation storage
- Using the best file formats
- Discuss the practice of long-term preservation

[Register for Managing and Preserving Digital Files](#)

Even more  
formats  
that matter

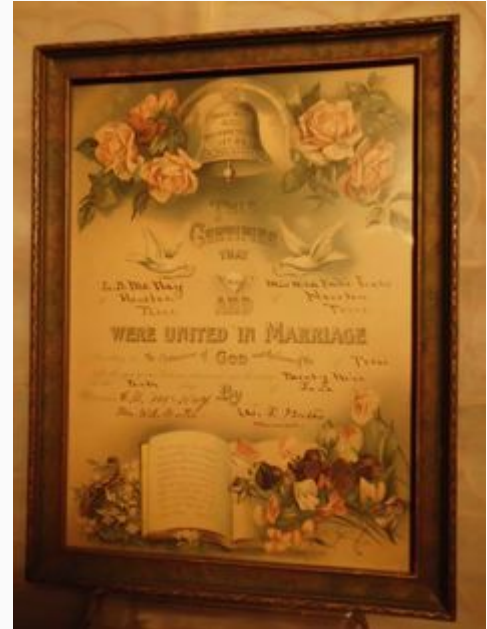
**Let's do  
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# Posters, Artwork, Large artifacts



## Refer to Guiding Questions

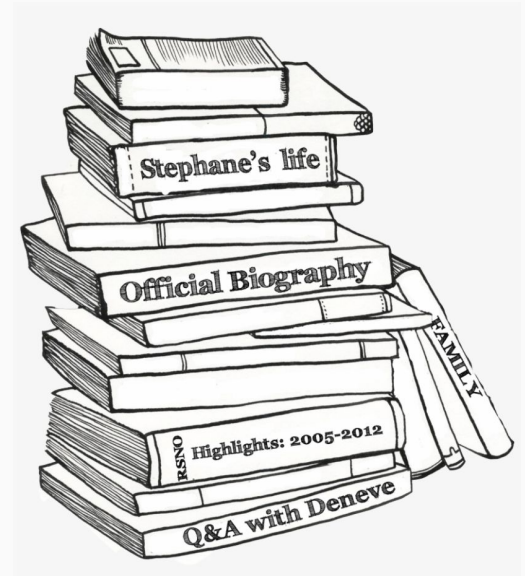
- How much can I manage to keep?
  - Do I have space and know-how to care for all the items?
  - Do items need conservation or restoration?
- The story it tells
  - Do items represent an important historical event or cultural tie?
  - Are items the work of person or community?
  - Do all items need to remain to tell the story?
  - Is the item described/inventoried along with the rest of my historical materials?
- If not me, then who will keep it?
  - Repository, Museum, School, Church
  - Another family or community member
  - The antiquarian marketplace



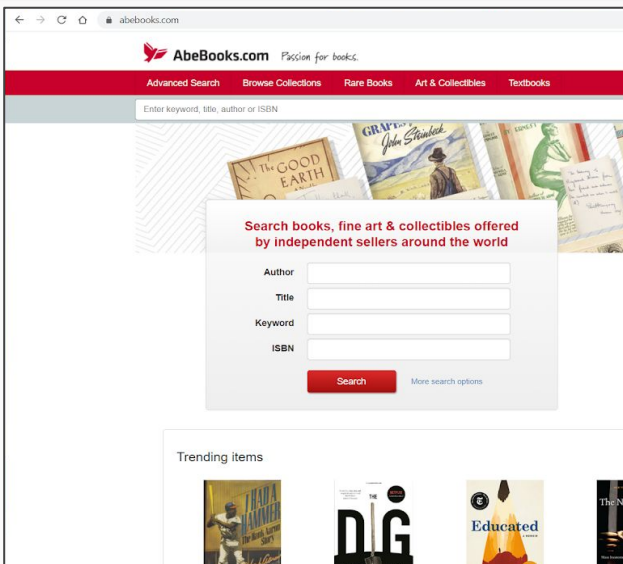
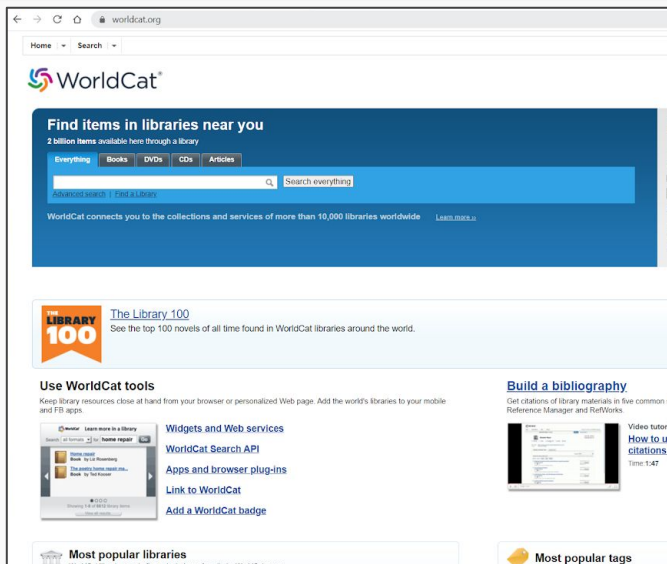
# Books

Identify books that can help tell the story

- Family histories
- Biographies, Autobiographies or Memoirs
- Published Genealogies
- Community histories
- Maps
- Published Member Directories
- Family bibles and other family religious books



# Books - “Is this a rare book?”



WorldCat

AbeBooks

Professional  
Appraisers

# Donating Collections or Items

## Where?

- Search for a place where researchers go
- Libraries
- Archival repositories
- Museums
- Historical Societies

## How?

- Website may offer donor guidelines
- Collection scope
- Contact before donating
- Deed of Gift

**Let's do  
a poll**

[Donating...to a Repository](#)

published by the Society of American Archivists



# Donating Collections or Items

## Be Prepared to Do Some Work

- Follow the recommendations of the repository to prepare materials
- Create an inventory (see the next slide)
- Remove unrelated and duplicative materials
- Provide the provenance - document the history of custody of the item/collection
- Tell the story in a biographical or historical narrative

## Why do institutions decline some donation offers?

- Out of scope
- Lack of resources and staff to manage collections

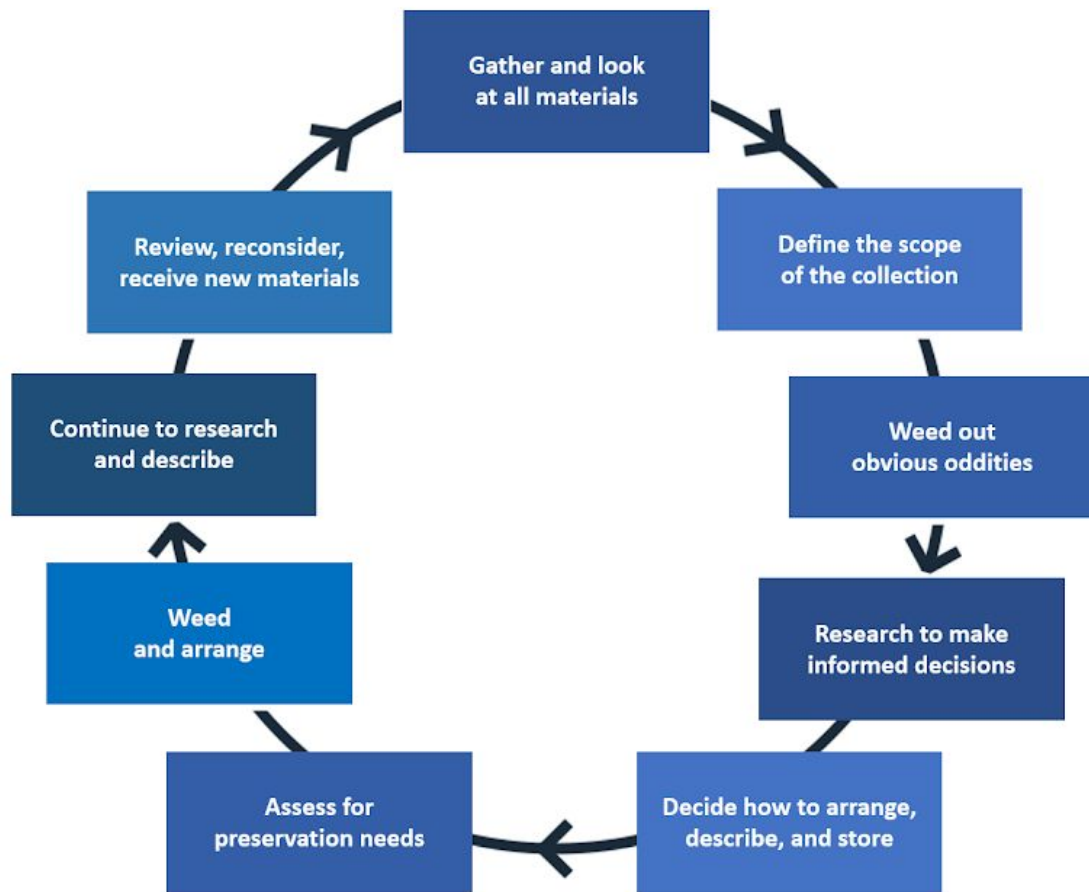




# Inventories

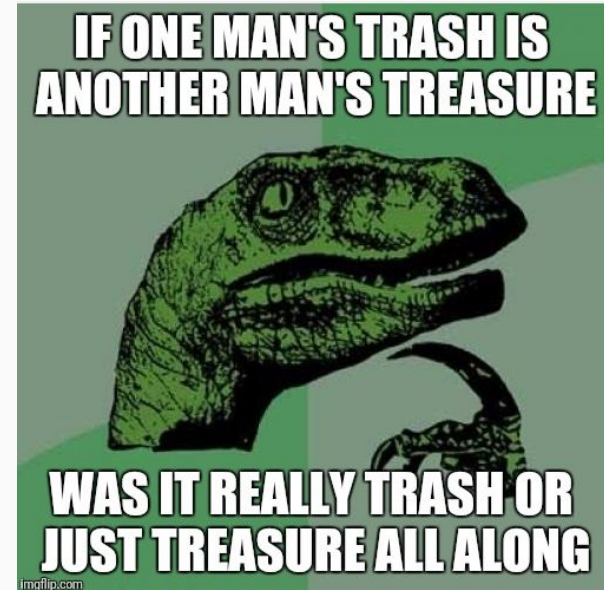
- What are they?
- Why are they useful?
- How do you make one?
- How detailed do they need to be?
  - [Basic inventory example](#)
  - [Series inventory example](#)
  - [Inventory of books example](#)

# Review the Collecting and Archiving Cycle



**Let's do  
a poll**

# Trash or Treasure?



# What's next?

- Identify collaborators
- Identify resources
- [Writing your Statement of Collection Scope](#)
- [My Archiving Plan](#)

# Q&A

**Let's do  
a poll**

**Let's do  
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