

# **An Evaluation of More Product Less Process (MPLP) Processing Methods at the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan**

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

The Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan is an agency of the Government of Saskatchewan with a total of 48 full time staff members and an annual budget of approximately \$4.6 million dollars (2015). The institution has a total of 29,345 metres of textual records, 107,398 maps/plans/and architectural drawings; 1,749,630 photographs and negatives, and an estimated 46,614 hours of audio/visual records in its holdings.<sup>1</sup> Of this, the backlog of unprocessed records was last estimated as being 33% of the total collection and represents 214.7 person years of work (Putz, Stoffel and Yewman, 2008, 6).

The Records Processing Unit, which has 4 processing staff, is tasked with addressing the backlog of unprocessed records. The Institution implemented a new program in 2009 based on the methods proposed in an article entitled “More Product Less Process (MPLP).” These methods advocated minimal processing work as being the most efficient means of addressing the backlogs many archival repositories have (Greene and Meissner, 2005). Specifically, the article advocates that only upper level description, arrangement, and preservation work be conducted to complete work on archival collections. Essentially MPLP advocates that no file or item level work be done and that records become accessible at the collection level. To date there is no information on how well this program has been operating or what its impact has been upon the institution.

This report will evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of MPLP minimal processing methods at the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan.

## Methodology and Methods

To conduct this program evaluation, both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed.

Logic models were created by the Processing Unit to document the ideal purpose of processing as well as the actual result from MPLP methods in use. These tools along with other activities established the goals for processing at the Provincial Archives and identified whether or not MPLP is effective in meeting them.

Staff from the Reference Services Unit were interviewed to determine the impact of minimal processing upon their unit. Institutional statistics were analyzed to determine if MPLP processing was able to meet its objective of backlog reduction and to analyze the efficiency of the method. Finally, a cost analysis of processing work conducted at the Provincial Archives provided additional data for analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> These statistics are derived from reports to the National, Provincial and Territorial Archives Conference from the 2014 reporting year. Electronic Records were further listed as being 77,000 gigabytes of records; however, backlog statistics for this record type have not been calculated previously and no processing metrics exist to provide a means of analyzing them, and so statistics for this format have been withheld from this report.

## Literature Review

A review of the archival literature was conducted to examine how institutions have implemented MPLP methods, and the benefits as well as problems and concerns with the methodology. The professional literature has remained somewhat divided on MPLP. Ultimately the literature review pointed toward the key differences between MPLP and traditional processing methods as essentially a tradeoff between efficiency and effectiveness. MPLP's critics have argued it is not particularly effective for access, control, and the preservation of non-textual records. The MPLP method's adherents have argued these shortcomings can be somewhat addressed by modifying the implementation of the procedures, but that they are ultimately balanced out by the major efficiency gains that the simplified procedures can bring. The implementation examples within the literature confirm this, as the average processing rate achieved by institutions was double the 4 hours per 1 cubic foot rate for processing suggested by the MPLP author's, a significant improvement over traditional processing methods (Greene and Meissner, 2005).

## Key Findings

Records Processing Unit staff participated in the development of logic models to highlight the ideal versus actual state of processing, and in a brainstorming exercise to determine the institutional goals of processing. The outcome of these activities showed that while MPLP procedures did provide some access to collections, they did not gain suitable control over collections or adequately preserve them according to the goals of the unit. The latter is largely owing to the lack of suitable environmental control in some of the storage areas at the Provincial Archives; this is arguably a requirement for MPLP methods (Canadian Conservation Institute, 2013).

Interviews with two Reference Services staff confirmed these suspicions. The staff members argued that MPLP processed collections caused significant barriers to patron access amounting to 'false advertising' of access, and a major increase in staff time to use and retrieve those records. They expressed further concerns over collection security and over the lack of rehoused photographic records in particular which could be inadvertently damaged from use. Finally, both noted that the transfer of records between the Saskatoon and Regina offices for patrons was no longer feasible for most minimally processed collections.

To examine the efficiency of MPLP, new backlog calculations were created from annual report statistics. Since implementing MPLP in 2009, the backlog of unprocessed records has actually increased from an estimated 214.7 person years' worth of work in 2008 to an estimated 336.2 person years' worth of work in 2015 (Putz, Stoffel, Yewman, 2008, 6).<sup>2</sup> Present estimates suggest that the backlog is growing by 20.3 person years annually on average. It should, however, be noted that the Records Processing Unit has not

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<sup>2</sup> These numbers were estimated using figures estimating the total backlog of records at the Provincial Archives by record type and the Canadian Council of Archives Time Guidelines for Arrangement and Description Projects

fully adopted MPLP. Approximately half of the unit's work annually is spent conducting processing for monetary appraisal, which involves additional processing work.

Further analysis was conducted to determine the extra costs associated with supplementing basic MPLP work. Statistics from file and item level work conducted on a single collection were analyzed to determine the total costs in labour and supply costs, this was further applied to the 2015 backlog statistics. The analysis suggested that conducting extra file and item level work for MPLP processed collections would have a total cost of \$1.1 million for file inventory work and \$0.7 million for item level work for all photographs in the backlog. In addition, the file level work was expected to add 22.7 person years to the backlog while the photograph work would add 9.7 person years

## Recommendations

The report found that the present implementation of minimal processing methods is neither effective nor efficient for the institution. To address this problem, it is recommended to modify the program by implementing the following recommendations:

- **Recommendation 1** - The Provincial Archives adopt the processing work rating and criteria assessment methods developed by the University of California Libraries.
  - These criteria should be developed alongside other units in a committee and incorporate the metrics and cost/benefit analysis from above into the decision making process that is created.
- **Recommendation 2** - Monetary appraisal work be streamlined to attempt to increase the efficiency of this type of processing, although this may entail higher costs for external appraisal consultants.
- **Recommendation 3** - Other units should adapt their present procedures to accommodate collections processed using MPLP methods, and should develop a means to track and communicate problems to identify future processing work.
- **Recommendation 4** - The Provincial Archives should focus its resources on addressing shortcomings in its storage environments to better preserve the collection as a whole.
- **Recommendation 5** - The Provincial Archives should conduct a follow up evaluation to ensure the program is working properly and to monitor key trends affecting the backlog over time

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## 1.0 Introduction

The Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan (Provincial Archives) is an agency of the Government of Saskatchewan responsible for collecting, preserving, and making accessible records of historical significance to the Province. As of March 1, 2015 it has 48 full time equivalent staff members and an annual budget of \$4.6 million dollars. The Provincial Archives has a total of 29,345 metres of textual records, 107,398 maps/plans/and architectural drawings; 1,749,630 photographs and negatives, and an estimated 46,614 hours of audio/visual records in its collection.<sup>3</sup> Of this, the backlog is presently (2015) estimated as being 9,851 metres, 1,287 maps plans and drawings, 846,212 photographs and negatives and 22,083 hours of audio/visual records. This backlog represents approximately 33% of the total holdings and was last estimated as being 214.7 person years' worth of work (Putz, Stoffel and Yewman, 2008, 6).<sup>4</sup>

### 1.1 Problem Definition

In an effort to reduce the backlog the Provincial Archives streamlined the work of the Records Processing Unit in 2009 by implementing procedures based on the More Product Less Process (MPLP) methodology. The method was proposed in a 2005 article by Mark Green and Dennis Meisner (Greene and Meisner, 2005). With the procedures now in place for the previous six years it was deemed prudent to examine the effects of this new program.

Anecdotal evidence has thus far suggested that MPLP methods have resulted in several externalities for the Provincial Archives. The Reference Services Unit has suggested problems have occurred providing access to collections processed using MPLP including the ability to identify, locate, retrieve, and return items. Other staff have questioned whether MPLP methods are adequate for the long term preservation of archival records given some of the assumptions present in the methodology. Finally, anecdotal evidence has suggested that even despite these streamlined processes, the backlog of unprocessed records has continued to grow at the Provincial Archives.

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<sup>3</sup> These statistics are derived from reports to the National, Provincial and Territorial Archives Conference from the 2014 reporting year. Electronic Records were further listed as being 77,000 gigabytes of records; however, backlog statistics for this record type have not been calculated previously and no processing metrics exist for them and so they have been withheld. Further, as the Provincial Archives is presently digitizing a large proportion of its holdings including already processed material, it is difficult to differentiate unprocessed versus processed electronic records at this time. A project to attempt to identify the backlog of unprocessed electronic records has been slated for 2016. The person year estimate for the backlog was calculated using the Canadian Council of Archives Time Guidelines for Arrangement and Description Projects.

<sup>4</sup> The 2008 report and a 1998 consultant's report also calculated the backlog assuming a 40% reduction for only doing upper level description, and included an additional 14.5 years of work for guide production and authority record production. These assumptions have been removed from this report for clarity's sake and to provide the most accurate estimate of the backlog.

## **1.2 Project Client**

The client for this report is Lenora Toth, Executive Director of Archival Programs and Information Management at the Provincial Archives. It was conducted as part of the duties of Jeremy Mohr, Manager of the Records Processing Unit.

## **1.3 Project Objectives and Research Questions**

This report is a program evaluation of the More Product Less Process (MPLP) methods in use at the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan. The central research question to be answered is have MPLP methods been efficient and/or effective for the Provincial Archives?

In addition it will examine several specific questions of how MPLP methods have impacted the organization:

- Have MPLP procedures affected the accessibility of archival collections?
- Is the Provincial Archives able to gain adequate control over its holdings using MPLP methods?
- Are the preservation assumptions underlying MPLP correct?
- How have MPLP methods affected the unprocessed records backlog at the Provincial Archives, and is the backlog affected by any other factors?
- Finally, can MPLP methods be modified to address some of the concerns identified or are other processing methods more suitable for the institution?

## **1.4 Organization of Report**

Following the introduction, this study will have seven main sections, background, methodology, literature review, findings, discussion, recommendations, and a conclusion. The background section will provide additional information on the institution and the MPLP program. The methodology and methods section focuses upon the activities conducted to evaluate this program, and how this data was used for analysis. The literature review section will give more information on how MPLP has been utilized within the archival profession, and some of the alternative means of implementing the program. The Findings session focuses upon the results of the research activities. It begins with qualitative analysis based upon the logic model and brainstorming exercises before moving into a discussion of the interview results with the Reference Services staff persons. The section then focuses upon the quantitative data from annual reports by calculating the present backlog of unprocessed records before turning to analysis of alternative MPLP implementations and projections of their impact upon the backlog. The section concludes with an analysis of the cost of additional processing work, based on projections obtained from a reprocessing project. The next section, discussion and analysis, will summarize the analysis from the literature review and the findings before moving on to the recommendations section and the conclusion.

## 2.0 Background

This section will provide background on the institution and the Records Processing Unit, the backlog problem, and the MPLP procedures put in place to address the backlog.

### 2.1 Establishment and Structure of the Provincial Archives

The Provincial Archives was established in 1945 with *The Archives Act*. It is a non-partisan agency at arms-length from the government run by a board of representatives comprised of members from the public, the two provincial Universities, and government. It collects records from the government of Saskatchewan as well as private individuals and organizations in order to document the history of the province. The Provincial Archives further makes these records accessible to the public, promotes their use and historical value, and preserves them for future generations. Finally, the Provincial Archives works with the government of Saskatchewan to help manage their operational and administrative records.

The Provincial Archives is comprised of several units divided on a functional basis. This report will focus primarily upon the activities of the Records Processing Unit. This unit was first established in 2006 as part of a reorganization of the institution based on function. Processing is defined as “The arrangement, description, and housing of archival materials for storage and use by patrons.” (Pearce-Moses, 2005).<sup>5</sup> As well as this function, the Processing Unit was also assigned the automation of descriptive tools; the production of guides to archival records; the supervision of appraisals of archival records for monetary value; and descriptive standards for the institution (Saskatchewan Archives Board, 2006). While the tasks of the Records Processing Unit were defined no documentation exists as to what the goals of these activities are in terms of the institution and its mandate.

At present (2015) the unit is comprised of eight individuals, of which four are directly involved in the processing of records, the other positions have administrative functions or work related to the Provincial Archives record database and online catalogue. The functions of the unit have changed little since the time of its inception. The most recent annual report indicated that “The Records Processing Unit manages the arrangement, physical processing, and description of public and private records in all formats in the Permanent Collection.” (Saskatchewan Archives, 2015, 30). In addition, the unit continues to have responsibility for the Provincial Archives’ database and online catalogue, descriptive standards, and for administering monetary appraisals (Ibid)

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<sup>5</sup> For further clarification, the process of arrangement refers to bringing or restoring order to a collection. Description refers to the activity of documenting the contents of a collection, as well as notes on the biographical or organizational history of the creator of the records.

## 2.2 The Backlog

Most archives in the modern era are facing growing backlogs of unprocessed records.<sup>6</sup> Theorists point to the information age as the cause, arguing that "...records are being created at a pace never before seen. Archives are accessioning these voluminous records and storing them in what will become their ultimate fate: the backlog." (Gorzalski, 2008, 187-8). A 1998 study of the Association of Research Libraries in the United States found that 13% of the institutions polled had more than half of their collections unprocessed; but this had grown to 34% in 2003-4 with 60% of those reporting noting approximately one third of their collections were unprocessed (Association of Research Libraries in Greene and Meissner, 2005, 210). The growing size of these backlogs are in stark contrast with the growing demand and expectation of the public to have more information available (Evans, 2007).

The Provincial Archives has been aware of the growing size of its backlog of unprocessed records for some time. In 1998 an outside consulting firm was hired to assess the backlog and recommend procedural changes to help reduce it. This report found that the backlog was the equivalent of 197.3 person years of processing work, it further advocated that staff minimize the descriptive work being done and focus primarily on higher level descriptions and conducting less or no item level descriptive work (Swift, Michael and Associates 1998, 53-54).<sup>7</sup> There is little evidence that these recommended procedures were fully implemented. The records backlog was again assessed by staff in 2008 finding it

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<sup>6</sup> Many institutions are reluctant to publicly announce their backlogs of unprocessed records as they typically reflect poorly upon the institution or have political implications. However, in some circumstances this information has been made available publicly by some institutions; been discovered via the reports of financial auditors; or been expressed explicitly via the literature. However, the measures provided often vary widely and are typically limited to physical measures in feet and metres and often seemed to have been obtained by estimating shelf space or box width, rather than the more accurate numbers based on extents determined from accession records used in this report. In 2008 the National Archives and Records Administration acknowledged a 1 million cubic foot backlog of records had accumulated just from 1995-2005 (Bucciferro, 2008), this was further clarified in 2010 as being 4 million pages (National Archives and Records Administration, 2010). In Canada a 2014 report by the national auditor found that Libraries and Archives Canada had a 98,000 box backlog of unprocessed records (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2014). The University of Alaska Fairbanks was one of the few to focus on non-textual records backlogs, stating it had a backlog of 1 million unprocessed images (Foster, 2006, 107). The University of Montana estimated their backlog as being 11.5 years, based entirely on their annual accumulation of 150-200 cubic feet of records annually and a 30-40 feet per hour processing time (Mcree, 2006, 285) The University of California Libraries had a similar rationale but provide few figures for their 10 campuses only noting that the backlogs varied from 0.2 years to 23.6 years depending on the campus (University of California Libraries, 2012, 4). Overall the varying methods of calculating and reporting on archival backlogs makes comparison between institutions difficult.

<sup>7</sup> The Swift report further argued that this total should be reduced by 40% by conducting this higher level descriptive work, but that an additional 14.5 person years is added to account for guide production and the creation of authority descriptions. Their revised total was 118.3 person years based on these assumptions. For clarity's sake and to ensure the most accurate estimate is provided, these assumptions have been removed from all backlog assessments in this report.

had grown to 214.7 person years' worth of work (Putz, Stoffel and Yewman, 2008, 10).<sup>8</sup> As well, the 2008 report further advocated for an adoption of processing procedures based on the MPLP methodology.

### 2.3 MPLP Methods

In 2005 Mark A. Greene and Dennis Meisner published the article "More Product Less Process: Revamping Traditional Archival Processing" in *The American Archivist*. This article suggested a radical rethinking of processing methodologies was needed in archival institutions to address the growing backlog of unprocessed records. The authors' argued that archivists should streamline or eliminate several processing practices to focus on reducing records backlogs and making larger volumes of material available for research (Greene and Meisner, 2005). In particular, the authors advocated for a minimum standard for processing with records only arranged and described at higher levels ideally the fonds level or series level;<sup>9</sup> and that little to no rehousing of items or replacing of file folders be done (Ibid). They argued that more traditional archival practices which focused on conducting these activities at lower descriptive levels were unnecessary and even wasteful within the overall context of an institution's mandate (Ibid). Overall the authors of the MPLP article prescribed a methodology for archival processing focused upon efficiency, and despite their suggestions for a minimum standard of work they left individual institutions to determine the specific application of their approach.

In 2009 the Provincial Archives became one of several archival institutions across North America to adopt the MPLP processing methodology. The stated purpose of these procedures was to reduce the backlog of unprocessed records (Putz, Stoffel, and Yewman, 2008). The procedures took much of their inspiration from the minimum standards advocated within the MPLP article. Records would only be arranged and described at the fonds level or in the case of government records at the series level.<sup>10</sup> The only control brought over lower levels of records would be a stamp on boxes and file folders with the fonds/series number and the accession number<sup>11</sup> being written on them. Material would not typically be rehousing, nor would minor preservation activities like removing metal fasteners be conducted. Finally, no item level arrangement or description would be done; non-textual records such as photographs or sound recordings would simply be counted and listed for the collection as a whole. A summary of these

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<sup>8</sup> The 2008 backlog calculation further applied the 40% reduction and 14.5 additional years for other work to their estimate, this figure was calculated as being 143.4 person years.

<sup>9</sup> Fonds refers to the collection as a whole, this in turn is subdivided into Series which refers to a similar grouping of records; the next level of organization is the File which corresponds to a grouping of Items, files are further subdivided into individual Items or the archival records themselves which are the lowest level of organization.

<sup>10</sup> At the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, government records would be organized under the Province of Saskatchewan Fonds with each ministry or department being under their own Series. Due to the volume of departmental records many of these Series records are comparable to large Fonds of private organizations and in some respects are treated similarly.

<sup>11</sup> An accession refers to a transfer of records brought into the Archives' holdings from one creator

procedures by record format compared with traditional processing procedures is available in Appendix 1 of this report.

Since 2009 not every collection was processed using MPLP methods. The Records Processing Unit annually works on collections donated to the Provincial Archives where the donors have also requested a tax receipt. Monetary appraisers are hired to assess this value. Staff at the unit have assumed that these collections require additional work to prepare them for monetary appraisal which would make MPLP practices unsuitable.<sup>12</sup> This assumption was primarily based around a 2008 jurisdictional scan of other provincial archives, all of whom noted that MPLP methods were not suitable for collections undergoing monetary appraisal (Putz, Stoffel, and Yewman, 2008).

MPLP methods were approved by the institution's management committee and to date approximately 30 collections have been processed using the MPLP methodology at the Provincial Archives. However, there is little evidence of additional training or supports being developed to assist staff in transitioning to the new procedures. Further, some of the recommendations from the 2008 report, to monitor the impact of MPLP upon other units and to evaluate the program after piloting the procedures for one year, have not been carried out (Putz, Stoffel, and Yewman, 2008). Since implementing MPLP no analysis of its efficiency at reducing the unprocessed records backlog or its effectiveness and impact upon the institution has been conducted.

### **3.0 Methodology and Methods**

This section of the report will define the methodology and methods utilized in the study and how this data was used to answer the project question of whether the MPLP program is efficient and effective.

#### **3.1 Methodology**

This study incorporated a mix of both formative and summative evaluation techniques, and was an *ex-post* evaluation, as it analyzed the MPLP program while it is still being used at the Provincial Archives (McDavid, Huse, and Hawthorn, 2013). Formative evaluations focus on analyzing why a program does or does not work with the intent of adjusting it for improvement (evaluationtoolbox.net, 2010). A subset of this evaluation type is the process evaluation. These analyze the steps undertaken within a particular program. Its focus is not only on what the program does but how it achieves (or fails to achieve) goals with the purpose of changing processes for improvement (McNutt, Wynne, 2014). The implementation examples outlined in the literature review of MPLP suggest that process changes in particular are necessary to achieve all of the goals of archives when implementing MPLP.

Summative evaluation focuses on analyzing whether the program achieved its goals, and whether or not it should continue (evaluationtoolbox.net, 2010). This type of evaluation is typically done upon the conclusion of a program, and while MPLP is still utilized at the Provincial Archives, enough time has occurred since minimal processing procedures were first enacted to draw some conclusions about their

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<sup>12</sup> This assumption of additional work is also based on consultations with other Canadian archival institutions conducted in 2008 which shared a similar opinion (Putz, Stoffel and Yewman, 2008).

impacts and recommend whether the practice should continue or be modified. One type of summative evaluation is the outcome evaluation. This focuses on the immediate and mid-term outcomes of a project and whether or not it achieved its goals (McNutt, Wynne, 2014). This evaluation method was useful in analyzing whether the original goal of implementing MPLP at the Provincial Archives was met. Specifically, it can identify whether minimal processing methods have reduced the unprocessed records backlog at the Provincial Archives.

One other type of summative evaluation utilized was the impact evaluation. This is a broader form of evaluation than outcome evaluation as it incorporates the entire net effect of a program including any unintended consequences (McNutt, Wynne, 2014). This focus particularly on the long-term impact of MPLP was useful in assessing how this process has affected the institution as a whole, and particularly its impact upon the work of the Reference Services Unit.

### 3.2 Methods

The archival literature has suggested that MPLP methods usually are able to reduce unprocessed records backlogs, but that these methods create negative externalities for institutions. Essentially, MPLP methods can be said to be efficient but not always effective. The literature has also pointed toward different means of implementing the MPLP methodology, which may be used to resolve some of the externalities identified. The literature review was conducted by searching specific archival journals primarily with the terms “MPLP” and “Processing.”<sup>13</sup> In addition the online databases of *Academic Search Complete*, *Humanities Index*, and *JSTOR* were searched with these terms along with “Archives” and/or “Archive.” The snowball method was also used from the bibliographies of key publications to find additional sources.

This study relied upon logic models developed with stakeholders from the Records Processing Unit to visually represent how MPLP operates, what inputs it utilizes, and what the intended and actual results are (McDavid, Huse, and Hawthorn, 2013). These tools can point to areas of the program where efficiency can be improved, particularly on how the program operates. As well, logic models inclusion of outcomes points to the intended effectiveness of the program and other factors possibly affecting it (McNutt, Wynne, 2014). The logic models were developed in two group sessions with staff from the unit. Participation was voluntary, with invitations being sent via an executive assistant from another work area. During the two sessions, staff also participated in brainstorming exercises including the development of formal goals for the Records Processing Unit by analyzing the institutional strategic plan and mandate. As well, participants were asked to comment on alternative implementations of MPLP and other possible means of improving the program.

Two staff persons from the Reference Services Unit Saskatoon office were interviewed via telephone as part of this study. They were asked their opinions on collections processed under the MPLP methods, and how in their opinion this affected patrons and their work. They were also asked to recommend

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<sup>13</sup> The specific archival journals consulted were *The American Archivist*, *Archival Issues*, *Archivaria*, *The Journal of the American Institute for Conservation*, *The Journal of Archival Organization*, and *Restaurator*.

some ways of improving MPLP methods, and their opinion of other MPLP implementations identified in the literature review.

Annual report statistics and processing statistics were analyzed in this study. The Provincial Archives regularly records statistics on the volume of records acquired annually, processed annually, and the total extent of all the records (both processed and unprocessed) within its holdings. This information was used to estimate the present backlog of unprocessed records. Finally, the Processing Unit was asked to reprocess a collection previously completed using the MPLP procedures. Statistics were tracked for this project so an analysis of the costs of additional processing work could be performed.

### **3.3 Data Analysis**

This study used both quantitative and qualitative data for analysis. The qualitative data primarily came from the archival literature and interviews/group exercises with Provincial Archives staff. The archival literature was used to determine whether the assumptions behind the recommendations of MPLP are correct. The literature also describes how MPLP has been received by other archival professionals and some of the potential problems and benefits in terms of accessibility, control over holdings, and preservation other institutions have experienced with it. These studies were examined alongside several examples of MPLP implementation to further determine means of modifying procedures to better address potential problems or shortcomings of MPLP at the Provincial Archives.

The group exercises and interviews were used to analyze the current state of the MPLP program at the Provincial Archives. This data was sought both from those actually implementing the program, and those from the unit most likely to be directly affected by the program, Reference Services. This data was used to identify any externalities that may be occurring for the institution, as well as to discuss means of addressing those problems.

Quantitative data analysis was derived from archival annual report statistics, and the Canadian Council of Archives time guidelines for processing projects (CCA Time Guidelines for Arrangement and Description Projects in Avery, O'Brien, and Hart, 2012). This analysis primarily focused upon the efficiency of the present program, but was also extrapolated to estimate the impact of alternative implementations of MPLP. Efficiency was determined both in terms of time and monetary costs to the institution. Finally, the processing statistics for the reprocessing project were used to extrapolate the costs of conducting additional processing work for the entire backlog of unprocessed records.

### **3.4 Project Limitations and Delimitations**

The qualitative data utilized in this analysis was primarily from the observations of Provincial Archives' staff which may have contained biases towards the requirements of their own units and not necessarily of the institution. As well, this data may not have necessarily focused upon the requirements that Provincial Archives' patrons may have for accessing collections, but only the observations and opinions of staff about what they feel those requirements may be for most patrons. A study of archival patrons is beyond the scope of this report.

Quantitative data used to calculate the records backlog in person years, is based on the Canadian Council of Archives time guidelines for processing. These time guidelines can vary dramatically by collection and material type, and may not be accurate for all collections or for all archival institutions depending on their practices.

Annual report statistics on the volume of records acquired by the Provincial Archives are based on estimates within a collection with the actual total not always known until the records have been processed. The collection chosen for reprocessing and the work conducted may not be completely representative of other archival collections, meaning further study of similar projects is required for more accurate estimates. Finally, electronic records were excluded from this study as no time guidelines exist for their processing, the content of these records can vary widely, and they represent many additional processing challenges compared to other formats.

## **4.0 Literature Review**

This section of the study will provide additional detail about the MPLP theory and its reception within the archival profession. It will then move on to analysis of how MPLP affects access, control, and the preservation of collections. It will conclude with a brief discussion of MPLP metrics and implementation methods employed by other archival institutions.

### **4.1 The MPLP Theory**

In 2005 Mark A. Greene and Dennis Meissner, troubled by the consistent growth in backlogs at their own and other archival institutions wrote an influential article with the hypothesis that "...processing projects [at archival institutions] squander scarce resources because archivists spend too much time on tasks that do not need doing, or at least don't need doing all the time." (Greene and Meissner, 2005, 209). The authors conducted a literature review, a review of grant applications for processing projects, and a survey of institutions. Their survey found that many institutions processed collections at the item level, but further that "...there is wide variation in what archivists believe are 'generally accepted norms' of processing." (Ibid, 215, 229). Their study pointed to further problematic recommendations from archival theory and textbooks. The literature tended to argue that item level work was seldom justified or advisable but would then go on to describe item level processing in terms that seemed to recommend work take place at this level (Ibid). According to the authors, much of this item level work served the needs and desires of the profession and not necessarily that of users or the collection itself. Greene and Meissner argued that archival processing procedures have not adapted to keep pace with the growing influx of material facing archives, and that this was a primary cause of the backlog facing most institutions.

The MPLP article argued that archivists should seriously question the processing methods they employ and analyze them based on their effectiveness versus the resources available (Ibid). They advocated for a minimal standard for processing work, limiting institutions to only basic steps. The authors argued that

arrangement should be limited to follow the archival principle of original order<sup>14</sup> and when order needed to be restored that this should be done virtually via databases or other electronic means rather than physically (Ibid). They indicated that archivists do too much descriptive work which was not being fully used by researchers and that more of the burden of research work should be shifted to users (Ibid). They stated that many preservation tasks such as rehousing materials in acid free containers and removing metal fasteners and rubber bands was extremely time consuming, pointing to a University of Washington study that indicated that 80% of processing time was spent on these tasks (Ibid, 221). Further, they argued these tasks were not necessary as most institutions' climate controlled facilities would offer more benefit to the materials and could "...carry the conservation burden." (Minnesota Historical Society, 2013, 4). Finally, they advocated that all three of these tasks arrangement, description, and preservation must be done concurrently, as doing one at a level lower than the other was not a good use of institutional resources (Greene and Meissner, 2005). However, they did concede that institutions must be flexible in their application of any processing methodology to meet the requirements of the records, the needs of their users, and in the face of differing levels of resources available.

## 4.2 The MPLP Reception

Determining the spread of the MPLP methodology is rather difficult to assess as few institutions make their processing manuals public. Further, even the MPLP article's authors admit that many institutions were already using aspects of minimal processing even prior to the article, and may have continued to do so without explicitly labeling their methods as being derived from or similar to MPLP (Greene and Meissner, 2005). The primary means of determining institutions that have adopted the methodology is by analyzing the literature. Several institutions have explicitly discussed their experiences using the methodology, and from this a better sense of the influence of MPLP can be estimated.

As the methodology originated in the United States, it is not surprising that this is where the methodology has primarily spread. As of January 2015, the literature points to approximately 43 institutions across the United States adopting the methodology, including notably the Library of Congress, several major Universities, and major state historical societies.<sup>15</sup> The Society of American

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<sup>14</sup> Archival practice has two primary principles. The principle of original order argues that archivists should avoid reorganizing collections and instead maintain or in some cases restore files to the same system of organization used by the creator. The second principle, the principle of provenance, advocates that archives should keep the records of a single creator together and to not separate materials from these collections.

<sup>15</sup> The institutions who have implemented MPLP based on a review of the literature include: the Auburn Avenue Research Library on African American Culture and History; Arizona State University Archives; Columbia University; ; Ohio State University Archives; Texas Christian University; the Academic Health Centre Archives at the University of Minnesota; the American Heritage Centre; the Kansas Historical Society; the Library of Congress; the Minnesota Historical Society; the Northwest Digital Archives; the Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries (23 institutional members used MPLP); the Smithsonian Institution Archives; the University of Alaska Fairbanks; the University of California Libraries; ; the University of Central Florida; the University of Massachusetts; the University of Montana; the University of North Carolina's Wilson Library; the Wisconsin Historical Society; Yale University

Archivists has also tacitly endorsed the methodology according to the MPLP authors, and this organization also includes a course on implementing MPLP in their regular professional development offerings (Crowe and Spilman, 2010). The MPLP authors also state that as of 2010 most of the archival literature has been favourable to MPLP, and several United States granting institutions have adopted MPLP as the recommended approach for their grant applications (Meissner and Greene, 2010).

The influence of the MPLP methodology upon Canada appears far more limited. The 2008 implementation of MPLP at the Provincial Archives also included a jurisdictional survey of 9 provincial archives and 2 municipal archives.<sup>16</sup> The survey found that none of these institutions were using MPLP specifically but had been using some streamlined processing methods not specifically derived from the methodology. In particular many of the survey respondents were limiting their work to upper level description for much of their processing activities; however, they continued to conduct item level preservation rehousing and arrangement and continued to conduct lower level descriptive work especially for collections undergoing monetary appraisal (Putz, Stoffel and Yewman, 2008). More recent evidence suggested that the British Columbia Archives piloted aspects of MPLP while processing a single collection in 2011 (Gilber, 2011); however, no other major implementation of MPLP is known to have occurred at a Provincial, Territorial or at the National Archives level in Canada (Linda McIntyre, personal communication, April 4, 2016).

The Canadian literature and professional activities further point to the limited spread of MPLP in this country. Since 2005 the Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA) conference has had only two sessions explicitly covering the MPLP methodology. The first session was conducted by the MPLP authors themselves in 2011 (Association of Canadian Archivists, 2011). The second session was partially devoted to MPLP featuring a discussion by Russell Buhr of the World Bank Group Archives (Association of Canadian Archivists, 2014). Further, *Archivaria*, the publication of the ACA, has had only a single published article devoted to MPLP; and this was published by an American practitioner (Oestreicher, 2013). The Archives Association of Ontario annual conference has had only one session devoted to MPLP, offered by an archivist from the University of Western Ontario (Thomas-Smith, 2015). This limited representation of MPLP in the profession within Canada may be owing to the Canadian conference and publication being more focused upon archival theory whereas American professional activities tends to focus more upon practice. However, the overall absence suggests that the MPLP theory has had limited influence within Canada as compared to the much wider adoption within the United States.

### **4.3 MPLP and Access**

Many archivists have feared that MPLP methods will have a major impact upon the provision of access to archival collections. Holly Mengel and Courtney Smerz have stated that "...reference...will be irreparably changed as a result of minimal processing." (Mengel and Smerz, 2013, 23). This fact is even acknowledged by the MPLP authors who state that reference staff must accept the additional workload

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<sup>16</sup> The institutions that responded to the survey included the Provincial Archives of: Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, the Northwest Territories, Ontario, Prince Edward Island; and the municipal archives of Vancouver and Toronto.

of minimally accessible collections (Meissner and Greene, 2010). However, Shannon Bowen Maier has argued that this impact is felt primarily in large institutions where functions like reference service and processing are split amongst staff (Bowen Maier, 2009). Theimer also argued that “Isn’t MPLP just shifting the burden of reviewing and understanding archival materials from processing archivists to reference archivists and our users?” (Theimer, 2008). Overall the literature argues the burden of minimal processing affects reference in the ability to find information, the ability to assist patrons, and time spent locating information.

One of the main advantages of file and item level descriptive work conducted under traditional processing is the ability to pinpoint exact pieces of information or items within a larger collection. Given that many archives have created these descriptive tools in the past, it is not surprising that many reference staff see their goal when assisting patrons as coming as close to what they need as possible (Bowen Maier, 2011). Several studies point to this lack of lower level descriptive work conducted under MPLP as being particularly problematic for personal papers or non-homogenous collections<sup>17</sup> (Mercer Sabre, Hamburger, 2008). Some even point out that without work at this lower level truly valuable information would likely not be discoverable (Wahbeh, 2009). This prompted Robert Cox to argue that “With minimal processing, we are creating a whole new generation of hidden history.” (Cox, 2010, 141). While many archivists are dissatisfied with this level of search-ability, how have patrons responded?

Shannon Maier Bowen conducted a 2008 survey of archival users at the American Heritage Centre to gauge their opinion of MPLP. With over 600 respondents she found that MPLP collections required more patron expertise to use; and many traditional users, notably University professors, still preferred traditional finding aids (Bowen Maier, 2009, 5-6). Finally, she noted that even where file lists existed with minimally processed collections, users found it difficult to navigate from the broader upper level description to the narrower file list suggesting additional descriptive levels may be helpful (Ibid). Jennifer Schaffner has noted further problems with MPLP’s methods as they open up more material for access leading not only to increased use but also requirements for more assistance by reference staff (Schaffner, 2009). Mathew Peek states that minimal descriptions “...will cost an archival repository in the long run with the time needed to answer researcher’s questions...” (Peek, 2012). Christine Wiedeman goes further arguing that minimal collections will force distance researchers to hire research assistants (Weideman, 2006). In effect MPLP becomes akin to a ‘Pandora’s box’ for reference staff and users, as once more and more collections are made available it encourages more use which can lead to larger problems and demands upon the institution to provide access.

The adherents to MPLP have different views of MPLP’s affect upon access to archival records. One of the primary purposes for archival processing is to make collections accessible, and the chief means this is accomplished is via finding aids. Larisa Miller has argued that the development of finding aids and higher levels of archival description occurred in response to the inability for archives to keep up with item level descriptive work; and MPLP developed in turn to respond to the inability of archives to keep up with

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<sup>17</sup> Most authors argue that the records of large institutions and organizations tend to be fairly well organized and so are typically more homogenous.

growing collections and lower descriptive levels (Miller, 2013). This comes as hardly a surprise to many, including the MPLP authors, who acknowledged many institutions were already doing minimal processing prior to their article (Meissner and Greene, 2010). Minimal processing is further argued to be beneficial as it focuses the efforts of archivists at the top of the descriptive hierarchy rather than the bottom, so their work has a greater cumulative effect upon the records. (Minnesota Historical Society, 2013).

The ability of users to find specific information has been one of the main arguments against MPLP, but this has been addressed by the methodology's adherents. The MPLP authors have argued that item level descriptions lead to bulky cumbersome finding aids which due to their size actually inhibit access (Meissner and Greene, 2010). Anne Foster has argued this can be addressed by focusing on creating a more thorough description at the collection level. She states that archivists can capture many of the details of the item level within the upper level via the use of subject headings, key names and place names within the broader description (Foster, 2006). How have patrons reacted to these minimal descriptive tools?

There have been several studies that have examined patrons and their use of collections, including minimally processed ones. Shannon Bowen Maier noted that her user survey of archival patrons indicated many researchers just browse collections, but that they also found that the professional jargon used within finding aids was a barrier to access and they preferred simpler descriptive methods (Bowen Maier, 2009). Others have found that subject based searching and simple text searching were the most utilized methods (Miller, 2013). Anne Foster has argued that users searching for photographs either want a highly specific item or just want to browse the collection of photographs anyway, so creating item level descriptions would not help with these overly broad searches (Foster, 2006). This broader level of searching fits with other studies that suggest that some patron's expectations are merely the ability to locate the repository in which a collection resides (Bowen, Maier, 2011).

The need to locate precise information for users seems to be a clear goal for many reference archivists. This desire for high precision searching seems to be caught up with notions of high levels of service for patrons (Bowen Maier, 2011). One of the MPLP authors notes that minimal description seems to have been caught in the "...longstanding tension between reference archivists facilitating research (and educating users) versus providing specific information from the collections..." (Greene, 2010, 182). Some institutions that have implemented MPLP have responded to this conflict by reminding staff that "...a finding aid is – a descriptive surrogate for the materials themselves – and [archivists need to] remind ourselves that we can't do it all and we'll never be able to find it all." (Deidre Scaggs, Director of Archives University of Kentucky, Presentation in 2009 to the Society of American Archivists in Meissner and Greene, 2010 186). This notion might equate a lower level of service to patrons, but it fits alongside the overall rationale behind MPLP and the sacrifices it can entail. However, a 2009 Society of American Archivists survey found that only a few respondents saw a decrease in the ability of reference staff to serve patrons or for those patrons to use collections after implementing MPLP methods (Crowe and Spilman, 2010).

The literature suggests a clear division within the archival profession around MPLP and access to collections. While the methodology does make more material discoverable, it also creates barriers to access as material residing within the collection is not so easily located. Much of this problem resides with the expectations of users and staff. Where precision is required in locating information, MPLP methods are woefully inadequate. If, however, expectations are shifted to acknowledge that additional time and effort may be required, MPLP does offer a utilitarian means of provisioning access to a greater proportion of the holdings of institutions. Ultimately, though the literature points towards some problems of effectiveness within the MPLP methodology.

#### **4.4 MPLP and Control**

MPLP processed collections also have generated concerns over the control of archival records. This is somewhat related to the ability to locate information within a collection noted above as well as the costs in time for retrieval. However, it also extends beyond this. The security of minimally processed collections is compromised as archives will not know when material has gone missing (Crowe and Spilman, 2010). The lack of control is further a problem returning records to their proper order after use particularly with poorly organized collections where file titles do not match the contents or if loose items reside within collections (Oestriecher, 2013). As well MPLP processing can result in potential breaches of privacy as this information is not always identified within collections (Croew and Spilman, 2011). Minimal descriptive work has implications on the crucial function of obtaining control over archival collections, particularly knowing what exactly archives have within their holdings.

The loss of control of holdings under MPLP has been addressed in the literature. Matt Gorzalski has argued that the additional time spent on retrieval of items is a "...trivial criticism..." given the benefits MPLP has on reducing the backlog (Gorzalski, 2008, 197). This utilitarian view is taken even further by the MPLP authors when examining privacy concerns. The authors argue that privacy is best identified at the higher levels of a collection as trying to identify all specific information at the lower levels opens up the archives for more scrutiny if specific individual files are missed in this review (Meissner and Greene, 2010). Overall they suggest that institutions should become more risk tolerant for issues like privacy using similar rationale as some have adopted for copyright legislation where the burden is shifted more toward the user (Ibid). Finally, the authors object to a common criticism that MPLP is unsuitable for less homogenous collections such as personal papers which may require more control and organization. Greene and Meissner argue that processing even under MPLP should be flexible and adjust to the needs of collections but also that archivists are overvaluing these types of collections if they are treated differently from institutional or organizational records (Greene and Meissner, 2006).

The literature suggests MPLP does not provide adequate control over collections. However, the adherents of MPLP argue this can be remedied by institutions and staff becoming more risk tolerant. This philosophical change may be difficult particularly when faced with the legislative challenges related to privacy and confidentiality. However, the MPLP author's acknowledgement for the need for more flexibility in processing may be the means to more readily address this issue.

## 4.5 MPLP and Preservation

The minimal processing methods advocated under MPLP have raised much concern over how they will impact the long term preservation of records. Archives ideally try to keep the records within their care forever. Some have argued that MPLP weighs access over preservation when making decisions, in particular the preservation of the entire collection over the individual items within it (McCann, 2013). The MPLP authors do argue against item level rehousing, removal of fasteners, and similar lower level activities and justify this as they regard a stable temperature and humidity as being more crucial to the lifespan of collections overall (Greene and Meissner, 2005). However, some have argued that MPLP methods do not account for the effects of acid migration between materials which can be mitigated by acid free or buffered containers (McCann, 2013). Jessica Phillips further argues that there is much anecdotal evidence of the benefits of item level preservation work, and that as archivists we have a duty to remove our collections from harm (Phillips, 2015). She further argues that while climate control is beneficial "...it does not eliminate the need for any further preservation or conservation work." (Ibid, 478).

The literature has also questioned the viability of MPLP methods if stable climate control is not achievable. Kate Theimer notes that the MPLP authors gloss over most preservation concerns and do not provide an answer as to how to use their methods when institutions lack a stable storage environment (Kay, 2008). Jessica Philips has further noted that climate control equipment is not fool proof and that its use may not be in line with green environmental initiatives, placing the sustainability of relying upon it exclusively into question for institutions (Phillips, 2015).

Others have questioned the focus on collection preservation over item level preservation. John Rothman has argued that items are important as they convey a sense of history to the user; original items are needed in exhibits; they can carry sentimental value; can have intrinsic value or in some cases monetary value (Rothman, 1990). Item level preservation work helps protect these records not only from the acids often present in the material but also from potential mechanical damage from use. Further to this the MPLP authors focus upon textual records when arguing that the physical environment is adequate enough for preservation, missing other formats and media from their rationale (Greene and Meissner, 2005). Photographic items can suffer from oxidization with the silver emulsion separating from the paper or other support; or they can fade and discolour over time even when kept in environmental conditions ideal for most paper based collections (Burge, Reilly, Nishimura, 2002).<sup>18</sup> Audio visual records present further challenges as not only is the media unstable and at risk, but many require specific equipment to facilitate their use. Without item level descriptive work these materials would often not even be identified nor would measures be taken to help preserve the formats adequately or the equipment necessary to utilize them (Ranger, 2012).

Some have also argued that MPLP methods will inhibit the ability of archives to digitally reformat their collections. This action is typically done to not only facilitate access and use, but to ensure that

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<sup>18</sup> Many colour photographic emulsions require sub-zero degrees centigrade storage conditions with specialized housing to avoid the breakdown of the image.

information is preserved. MPLP methods fail to capture important item level detail sometimes necessary for the creation and maintenance of digital records (Kay, 2011). Stephanie Crowe and Karen Spilman have predicted that MPLP methods are more of a fad of the present times that will fade as mass digitization becomes more possible and refocuses the efforts of institutions on item level work (Crowe and Spilman, 2010).

MPLP adherents have also addressed some of the preservation related objections to the methodology. The MPLP authors argued that the archival profession is placing preservation far ahead of access in terms of its priorities and item level processing activities demonstrated this (Greene and Meissner, 2005). However, they further suggest that many of the preservation activities taking place are not truly necessary in institutions with stable environmental conditions stating that "...our profession awards a higher priority to serving the perceived needs of our collections than to serving the demonstrated needs of our constituents." (Ibid, 212).

The storage environment does play a very crucial role in the preservation of historical records. There have been several detailed studies of the effects of temperature and humidity upon paper records. A 2002 study argued that temperature and humidity stability would slow the harmful chemical reactions causing the breakdown of items (Burge, Reilly, Nishimura, 2002). A 2007 study examined the effects of temperature on records enclosed within boxes and found that environmental stability is crucial particularly when monitoring the ability of the enclosed paper to absorb and desorb water; and further that major temperature and humidity fluctuations may have a long term impact on paper that is not reversible (Knop, Banik, Schade, and Bruckle, 2007). Another study argued that under ideal environmental conditions (a temperature of 17-21°C and 50% relative humidity) it takes many years for paper to show any signs of aging (Zervos and Moropoulou, 2006). One study summed up the benefits of the physical storage environment by stating that "It follows that developing good storage conditions may be the priority over rehousing." (Burge, Reilly, Nishimura, 2002, 290). Even if archival storage rehousing has been proven to be less crucial than the physical environment what is the effect of rehousing upon archival records?

Even prior to the MPLP article's conclusion that item level rehousing was wasteful, the thought had entered the profession. Maynard J. Brichford stated that "We have wasted a lot of money placing acid-laden documents in acid-neutral folders and boxes." (Maynard J. Brichford "Seven Sinful Thoughts" *American Archivist*, 1980, 432 in O'Toole 1989, 22). James O'Toole carried on this argument stating that "Not even the most enthusiastic conservator can say with any certainty what the measurable benefits of acid-free storage are..." (O'Toole, 1989, 24). Later studies have confirmed some of these arguments to a degree. One noted that the primary cause of paper breakdown over time was due to the presence of lignin in paper, an acidic compound found in wood fibers; however, new paper production processes have largely removed lignin from most types of paper (Calvini and Gorassini, 2006). A 2010 study of the effects of preservation containers found that some archival quality enclosures can cause the creation of a microclimate trapping humidity within, potentially negatively affecting the records the containers hold (Schonholm, Gluck, Kuhner, and Banik, 2010).

Other studies have argued against the primary means of analysis for paper preservation, accelerated aging tests. These tests have been said to be very problematic and "...do not allow any prediction of the life expectancy of paper..." (Calvini and Gorassini, 2006, 286). Several experts argue that most accelerated aging tests only examine the effects of temperature upon paper, leaving out other factors that may affect it including humidity, paper acidity, and the proximity and quantity of other paper (Zervos and Moropoulou, 2006). Most importantly, no paper conservation study has analyzed the effects of acid free or buffered enclosures upon the lifespan of paper using these accelerated aging techniques (Ibid). While the physical environment may be the most crucial factor for paper based textual records, how do other formats fare if not rehoused in preservation containers?

Other archival records do receive some benefit from temperature and humidity stability. However, many are best kept at considerably colder temperatures or different humidity levels than what are recommended for most paper collections (Adelstein, 2009). Despite the inability of the storage environment to ensure the preservation of many non-textual records, many MPLP adherents still argue against rehousing these items.

Hillary Seo and Tanya Zanish-Belcher argue that the highly complex and specialized conservation treatments that archives would need to undertake to preserve many types of non-textual records are "...out of the realm of possibilities for most item level processing conducted at archives..." due to the high cost, expertise and time involved (Seo and Zanish-Belcher, 2006, 47). The Minnesota Historical Society states that often specific items within a collection, unidentified photographs in particular, do not necessarily have any more value than other records and should not warrant any special treatment merely due to their format (Minnesota Historical Society, 2013).<sup>19</sup> However, this manual does advocate the use of judgment in this area and it also includes instructions on rehousing photographs that have significant historical value (Ibid). Other studies have argued that because many audio-visual media have such short lifespans, that most preservation treatment undertaken would offer little benefit and have little effect on the items anyway (Bachli, Eason, Light, McAnnaney, Morrison, and Seubert, 2012). James O'Toole notes that in the modern era preservation should be replaced by reformatting of items, he stated that "... [archivists] convinced of how important it was to preserve their physical holdings permanently...began to realize how impossible it would be to do precisely that." (O'Toole, 1989, 21).

With preservation not always being possible many archives have looked toward digitization, but here to the MPLP methods have come under scrutiny. Some have argued that digitized records as well as born digital records require item level work to capture the necessary information for their technical needs to be met over time (Kim, Dong, Durden, 2006).<sup>20</sup> However, other technological tools can greatly aid with

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<sup>19</sup> It should be noted that Dennis Meisner one of the MPLP article authors is presently employed by the Minnesota Historical Society and likely contributed to the establishment of the referenced procedures.

<sup>20</sup> In particular, digital records require information on the operating system under which they were created; the program and version they were created in or which is necessary to open them; information on the format; information related to any compression undertaken; information related to any password protection, security, or encryption; as well as information related to any physical media they may be housed within.

this process, particularly batch metadata harvesting software which can capture much of the required information for preserving these formats.” (Ibid). Max Evans has noted that some archives are able to outsource metadata creation to online users, noting the success of the National Library of Australia, and that the focus of archives should thus be the mass digitization of collections and not on providing metadata for each image (Evans, 2007).

The literature suggests that MPLP’s reliance upon the physical environment to meet the preservation needs of collections is largely correct. Even many of the opponents of MPLP would regard a stable storage environment as being the most crucial aspect to ensure preservation. Further, the studies have shown that only anecdotal evidence exists on the benefits of preservation rehousing, particularly as an alternative to stable storage environments.<sup>21</sup> It should be noted, however, that the lack of empirical studies on this subject does not necessarily mean that preservation rehousing is not beneficial. There is still considerable debate on the suitability of MPLP methods for collections undergoing reformatting or digitization. This debate may largely be owing to the different reformatting and digitization practices and technology being used by institutions.

The literature related to MPLP suggests a clear divide within the profession related to balancing the needs of access and preservation. The shift toward access over preservation as suggested in the MPLP article has clearly met with some opposition. This debate, as with the other previous ones, is once again a matter of the philosophical approach of archivists. MPLP’s utilitarian approach focuses on the collection as a whole at the expense of individual items. While its opponents argue that this is not advisable given that all archival records have historical value. Once again to find balance between these two approaches will require more flexibility in the processing approach pursued. Not surprisingly, organizations that have implemented MPLP have often done exactly that; modifying the methodology to suite the specific needs of their organization and the records in their care.

#### **4.6 MPLP Implementations and Metrics**

Many institutions that have implemented MPLP have come up with modifications to the minimal processing methods advocated in the 2005 article, particularly to address some of the shortcomings regarding reference, control over the holdings, and preservation. Most adherents of MPLP argue this modification of the basic minimum procedures from the MPLP article is still acceptable, as the authors themselves mention that any processing practice should be flexible to meet the specific circumstances facing archives (Greene and Meissner, 2005).

Several institutions that have implemented MPLP have had to modify their reading room procedures. Max Evans has argued that the most key procedural change is that archives must begin tracking feedback from patrons as well as tracking use; this data can then be used to justify any additional work required on minimally processed collections (Evans, 2007). The University of California Libraries

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<sup>21</sup> Preservation storage containers would have more clear preservation benefits in limiting damage from handling, while this does help preserve collections this form of damage is not as prevalent as the most touted benefits of preservation rehousing which is reducing acid migration between items.

purchased additional supplies to aid reading room staff including place marker cards to mark where items were removed, gloves for the handling of unsleeved photographs and negatives, and a stamp stating "Photos Present" to alert staff to give patrons gloves for handling these items (Bachli, Eason, Light, McAnnaney, Morrison, and Seubert, 2012). The Kansas Historical Society further found that alongside procedural change is a perspective change that staff in the reading room must accept the ongoing problems of not being able to assist patrons with highly detailed specific requests; and that missing boxes, misfiled materials, poor order, and complexity will be ongoing issues when working with minimally processed collections (Gorzalski and Wiget, 2011).

Many institutions have modified MPLP for both reference and control shortcomings by requiring some file inventory work be completed. The American Heritage Center found that even basic box contents lists containing fairly minimal detail could still be relatively effective for many of their reference and control needs (Bowen Maier, Dean, and Archer, 2008). The benefits of file lists were further confirmed by user surveys conducted at the Northwest Digital Archive and by the Society of American Archivists (Edmundson-Morten, 2007; and Bowen, Maier, Dean and Archer, 2008).

One of the crucial modifications several institutions have made to the minimal processing methodology has been to establish specific criteria to do work beyond the minimum. The simplest implementation of this takes the feedback from reading room patrons to assess the need to supplement minimal descriptions. Max Evans has argued that "Basic description sets the stage for establishing additional priorities." (Evans, 2007, 389). Researcher demand and willingness to pay for access can further fund additional work such as digitization (Ibid). The University of California Libraries have instituted similar models but instead have users pay for preservation work in instances where material is restricted for access due to the risk of damage (Bachli, Eason, Light, McAnnaney, Morrison, and Seubert, 2012). At the University of Alaska Fairbanks the patron driven processing model is applied to photographs which are only numbered or sleeved after a request for reproduction by a patron occurs (Foster, 2006).

Several institutions have developed specific criteria to prioritize additional work. Humboldt State University lacked stable environmental controls and thus had to customize the minimal processing methods of MPLP (Harling, 2014). The University of Alaska Fairbanks decided certain photographs required additional preservation attention particularly glass plate negatives, nitrate negatives, any pre-1896 photographs, or any high profile photographs (Foster, 2006). The Minnesota Historical Society argued that this additional preservation work would only be done if the records contained significant information (Minnesota Historical Society, 2013). The University of California Libraries has the most elaborate means of this approach, as they developed a chart and rating system to assign specific values to collections. This number in turn dictates the level of work that is undertaken based on a processing and control level work chart (Bachli, Eason, Light, McAnnaney, Morrison, and Seubert, 2012).

A few institutions have taken the MPLP methodology and attempted to incorporate other archival functions within it. Specifically, they have added the function of accessioning into their procedures for processing. Given that the purpose of accessioning is to bring basic control over a collection newly acquired by an archives it is not surprising that given the potential overlap with processing that some are addressing the backlog at its point of creation. At Yale University and the Ohio State University

Archives, minimal processing is conducted as accessions are brought in to keep them out of the backlog. (Weideman, Beinecke, and Landis, 2008; Noonan, 2014). The Smithsonian Institution Archives has similar methods but further sets performance targets for their archivists that 60% of the material accessioned will be processed within one month after it has been received (Wright, 2010).

At the University of Massachusetts, Robert Cox, has implemented another means of adopting minimal processing he has entitled 'Maximal Processing.' Using this methodology his institution has three distinct phases of work, pre-description, description and post description, starting with minimal processing before proceeding to gradually more work and control applied to the collections over time (Cox, 2010). This method differs from the minimal processing method as it assumes and plans for additional work to take place at a later date. It further prioritizes this work based not just upon user demand, but attempts are made to predict future use, to factor in political considerations, and the use of material for marketing and promotional purposes (Ibid). Maximal processing seems to be what most institutions have in mind when implementing minimal processing already, that additional work will typically take place in the future.

Despite these varying implementations of MPLP, the issue remains as to what the ultimate consequences are for those institutions that are only able to implement basic minimal processing (Wahbeh, 2009). It should be noted, however, that the collection level assessment and prioritization of material provided by minimal processing does appear to have some benefit. To see if this additional work is truly feasible we must know examine how MPLP has affected the backlog of unprocessed records at these institutions and what rates they are able to achieve when processing using these methods.

Attempting to determine processing metrics for archives has troubled the profession for some time. The unique nature of archival collections coupled with the varying practices of institutions has made measurement difficult to determine. The MPLP authors had to examine a variety of studies to try and estimate baseline processing rates. The authors found metrics ranging from 40 hours per foot to 3 hours per foot from a variety of articles and case studies (Greene and Meissner 2005, 222-3). They argued that an average of 20 to 25 hours per foot seemed to be the mean for most archival institutions (Ibid, 253). Greene and Meissner then suggested that the target metric for archives implementing MPLP minimal processing methods should be 4 hours per foot (Ibid, 253). Have institutions who have implemented these methods found this rate achievable?

Institutions who have reported their processing metrics have implemented MPLP in many different ways sometimes making the numbers difficult to compare precisely. However, an average of the metrics would suggest the typical processing rates that could be achieved. The processing metrics for 8 specific MPLP implementations was available in the literature.<sup>22</sup> The average rate achieved from these

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<sup>22</sup> The University of California Libraries found an average of 1 to 3 hours per foot (Bachlie, Eason, Light, McAnaney, Morrison and Seubert, 2012, 22); the Kansas Historical Society achieved a rate of 45 minutes per foot (Gorzalski and Wiget, 2011,11); the University of Montana achieved a rate of 2 hours per linear foot (McCrea, 2006, 288); the Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries implemented MPLP across 23 institutions and achieved a rate of 4 hours per linear foot (Mengel, 2012); the Minnesota Historical Society

implementations is 2 hours per linear foot, doubling the rates recommended by the MPLP articles as a suitable target.<sup>23</sup> Two institutions, the Kansas Historical Society and Texas Christian University, had substantially lower rates achieving approximately 0.75 hours per foot (Gorzalski and Wiget, 2011, 11; and Strom, 2005, 111). Only one institution exceeded the average, the Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collection Libraries, which implemented MPLP across 23 of their institutional members, achieved rates of 4 hours per linear foot (Mengel, 2012).

The implementation examples from the literature suggest that institutions have taken many different approaches to minimal processing methods. This level of flexibility is both a strength and a weakness of the methodology. It allows institutions to adapt to their particular circumstances as well as the the records themselves. However, it does little to address the MPLP authors' own initial criticism that archival processing methods vary so greatly (Greene and Meissner, 2005). As well, the recommendations for minimal processing suggested by the authors may have at times been followed too blindly by professionals with little regard for other consequences to the institution. Despite this MPLP is valuable. It should, however, be regarded more as a methodology for reframing the decisions archivists make than a strict procedural doctrine. The MPLP methodology advocates focusing on the resources, goals and needs of the institution rather than the narrow specific perspectives archivists have for individual records (Meissner and Greene, 2010).

## 5.0 Findings

This section of the report will focus upon the research activities conducted to evaluate the MPLP program. It will begin with a discussion of the outcome of the logic model and group exercises conducted with Records Processing Staff, before moving on to discuss the results of the interviews with Reference Services Staff. It will then analyze annual report statistics to determine the present backlog and extrapolate the effects of alternative MPLP implementations upon it. Finally it will conclude with a discussion of the costs of additional processing work, derived from an archival collection reprocessing project.

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achieved a rate of 1.62 hours per foot (Meissner, 2012); the Texas Christian University had rates for a single collection and achieved a rate of 0.76 hours per foot (Strom, 2005, 111); the Smithsonian Institute Archives has achieved a rate of 58 minutes per linear foot (Wright, 2010); finally the Yale University Archives reported on two specific collections with one 16 linear foot collection taking 320 minutes and a 7 foot collection averaging 25 minutes per foot, they further found an average of 2.5 hours per foot for family papers (Weideman, 2006, 277, 281).

<sup>23</sup> The average processing rates reported (see footnote 27) were 2 hours per foot (University of California), 0.75 hours per foot (Kansas Historical Society), 2 hours per foot (University of Montana), 4 hours per foot (PACSL), 1.62 hours per foot (Minnesota Historical Society), 0.76 hours per foot (Texas Christian University), 0.97 hours per foot (Smithsonian Institute Archives) and 2.5 hours per foot (Yale University). The average of these rates is 2 hours per foot.

## 5.1 Logic Model and Brainstorming Exercises

To determine the goals of the Processing Unit and the impact of MPLP upon them, documents created during the foundation of the unit and institutional annual reports were consulted. A 2006 document created during the formation of the unit assigned responsibility for: arrangement and description; physical processing, the automation of descriptive tools via databases; supervision of monetary appraisals; descriptive standards; and guide production (Saskatchewan Archives Board, 2006). These instructions suggested some overlap or closely related responsibilities with other units created at the time.

While the tasks of the Records Processing Unit are well defined, the purpose or goals of those tasks in relation to the institution have not been. To help define these goals four members of the Records Processing Unit met and participated in two, two-hour brainstorming and logic model group exercises. A logic model is a visual means of displaying the relationships between resources, activities, products, and outcomes of a program. They provide a means of analyzing what the program is desired to achieve and what it actually achieves, and how the relationships between the elements of the model affects this. The product of these group activities was to create a logic model for ideal processing along with the logic model for minimal MPLP processing. Ideal processing was defined as the more traditional processing activities of the unit. This would include file and item level descriptive work, arrangement, and rehousing and other preservation activities. MPLP processing was defined as minimal processing work with arrangement and description only at the upper level of a collection (the fonds or series level) with no file and item level work conducted. The logic model and brainstorming activities helped establish the goals of processing for the Provincial Archives. The participants were also asked their opinion of several optional methods of implementing MPLP determined from the examples within the literature review.

Appendix 2 is the logic model for ideal processing at the Provincial Archives and Appendix 3 is the logic model for MPLP minimal processing. There are some significant differences between the two. Under the inputs section of the logic models, we can see that MPLP does not make use of preservation supplies or specialized equipment as little actual item level work is conducted. Tax receipts, monetary appraisers, and donors are removed entirely from the MPLP logic model as this function does not presently take place when using this method. The Activities section of each model highlights the efficiencies of MPLP. Basic appraisal of collections (weeding) is not conducted, and rarely is the identification of restricted material,<sup>24</sup> basic preservation rehousing, labeling/numbering or file listings.<sup>25</sup> The products category of the logic models shows further differences as MPLP does not include tax receipts for reasons highlighted earlier, nor does it include rehousing items.

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<sup>24</sup> While the processing procedures for MPLP at the Provincial Archives state this activity is to take place it has not because staff typically have not undertaken work below the collection level meaning restricted material is not often identified.

<sup>25</sup> MPLP processing can identify preservation needs and does often include some box numbering however; this is at a much more rudimentary level than under traditional processing.

The short term outcomes of the models show that MPLP only allows for very basic control over the holdings and does not allow for a decrease in shelving space or the identification of restrictions. The midterm outcomes of the models show that MPLP is unlikely to see increased revenue due to the lack of item level descriptions to facilitate this. As well the use of the collection in publications, for educational purposes or for outreach purposes is extremely limited. The logic models show that the lack of preservation work under MPLP can impact the relationship that exists between the preservation of the material and the long term social and institutional goals of processing. However, it should be noted that the preservation benefits that exist in the ideal logic model are based on the assumption that preservation rehousing has clear benefits to collections. The archival literature review has challenged this assumption indicating no clear empirical evidence on the benefit of this activity exists.<sup>26</sup> This suggests that the preservation benefits that exist in the ideal logic model may be far more limited than the model suggests. The differences in both short and long term outcomes in the logic models highlight some of the problems that minimal processing has caused for the Provincial Archives, but how important are these outcomes to the institution?

The Records Processing Unit used the logic model and a brainstorming exercise to help determine what the goals of processing are for the institution.<sup>27</sup> The unit agreed that the main purposes of processing are to facilitate access, to gain physical and intellectual control over holdings, and to ensure the preservation of archival records. An additional goal, to facilitate the acquisition of records was specific to monetary appraisal processing. When examining the MPLP logic model in relation to these goals it can be shown that minimal processing offers limited means of facilitating access, limited intellectual control, while doing little to address physical control and preservation. For the latter, MPLP actually assumes this will occur passively based on the institution's storage environment. However, many of the Provincial Archives storage areas lack adequate climate control (Canadian Conservation Institute, 2013).

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<sup>26</sup> The literature review pointed to item level rehousing as having only anecdotal evidence as to its benefit, particularly when compared to the benefits of proper climate controlled storage facilities. It should be noted that rehoused materials would still receive some protection from damage during use. However, this type of damage typically has limited impact upon archival collections as a whole and can often be mitigated by providing gloves to users.

<sup>27</sup> The logic model and brainstorming exercises were conducted during two, 2 hour sessions with the 4 processing staff members from the Records Processing Unit participating as a group. The participants were given a brief explanation of what logic models are and how they can be used. They were next tasked with creating a logic model for ideal processing including identifying all inputs, activities, participants, products, and outcomes. Participants later confirmed the resulting logic model and a similar version created for MPLP processing methods. Staff were also asked to examine the Provincial Archives mandate and vision statements. They participated in exercises to create similar statements for the Records Processing Unit and were asked to identify the sections of the mandate and vision statement that the unit directly affected for the institution. Finally, staff were presented with several example implementations of MPLP from other institutions, notably the University of California Libraries method, the Kansas Historical Society method, the Smithsonian Institute Archives method, and the University of Massachusetts method. They were asked about their opinion of the pros and cons of each implementation, how it might be implemented at the Provincial Archives, and what affect it might have upon the institution.

This analysis suggests that even within the scope of the Records Processing Unit's activities that MPLP methods are not necessarily effective. As well, those institutions that view their minimal processing implementation as successful have had to adjust their institutional processing goals, and accept more limited access and control over collections.

During the group exercises, the Processing Unit staff were also asked to evaluate some of the possible alternate methods of implementing MPLP found during the literature review. The unit first examined the rating and criteria system for processing work developed by the University of California Libraries. This method had the most approval by the staff particularly as it provided a more objective form for guiding processing decisions, was very flexible in its application, and could prove to be a useful training tool for new staff. The participants agreed that the input of other units at the Provincial Archives would be desirable in developing similar criteria for the institution, and that similar charts could further be used during the appraisal or accessioning of new collections to provide additional recommendations for processing work.

Processing Staff that participated in the brainstorming and logic model sessions were less receptive to other implementation methods. Accessioning as Processing argues for minimal processing to occur as material is acquired. Participants deemed this method to be problematic. For government records in particular, this method would prove difficult without the context of related material, given the numerous changes that occur within the organizational structure of governmental departments and the varied means these collections are often sent to the archives. One staff person asked "Why would we bother working on descriptive records [for this information] when we could just make the accession record itself available?" The unit did agree however, that this method may offer one of the most efficient means for addressing the backlog of records if only basic access is deemed to be the primary goal of processing.

Processing staff were asked about their opinion of maximal processing during the group sessions. This method focuses upon implementing minimal processing but it also includes plans for additional processing work at a later date. Staff worried about the practical issues when flagging material for future work, when this future work would occur, and how this information could be used to alert the unit to pressing needs for processing. As well one staff person asked "Why not just address some of this work while processing the collection to begin with?" The reactions to this method suggested a great deal of additional planning would be required to implement it at the Provincial Archives.

Finally, the brainstorming and logic model participants were asked about the feasibility of continuing with minimal processing but also implementing a processing on demand option. Under this method, patrons, reference staff, or other staff experiencing problems with a collection could request that additional work be conducted. The participants were concerned about the timeframe for this additional work and that it would require staff to 'drop everything' to be truly responsive likely resulting in many partially completed projects. They wondered about the practicality of attempting this if multiple requests for large collections were submitted and how this would be prioritized. They indicated major process changes at Reference Services and the Processing Unit would have to occur to accommodate this. As well, the expectations of staff and patrons would have to be carefully managed.

The logic model and brainstorming exercise with Records Processing staff revealed some of the shortcomings of minimal processing for the unit. Given the institutional goals for processing, MPLP methods seem lacking in several areas and would require either adjusting these goals or additional future work to meet them. When examining possible alternative implementations, participants were unanimous in recommending the University of California Libraries' criteria for rating and processing records. This exercise raised the question, that if MPLP has proven to be ineffective for Records Processing, how has it affected other units? In particular, how has MPLP impacted the primary user of processed collections, the Reference Services Unit?

## **5.2 The Impact of MPLP on Reference Services**

To better determine the impact of minimal processing upon the organization, interviews with staff from the Reference Services Unit were conducted. This unit is impacted the most by the activities of processing. They make direct use of finding aids and records descriptions; they assist patrons in navigating these tools; they regularly retrieve and refile materials that have been processed; they reproduce records for patrons; and they often transfer materials between the Regina and Saskatoon offices for patrons. Given that access to records is one of the fundamental purposes of archives, knowing how reference staff and patrons are able to use collections processed under MPLP is vital. Two staff persons' from the unit were interviewed to gauge their opinion of MPLP and its impact upon their unit, as well as their observations of how the methodology has affected patrons. They were each asked ten questions focused upon these issues as well as some of the possible modifications to MPLP derived from the implementation section of the literature review.

The Reference Services Interviewees were well aware of the processing work not being completed under MPLP procedures at the Provincial Archives. They primarily knew about MPLP from the actual work or products of the Processing Unit. They were far less knowledgeable about the actual content of the MPLP procedures being implemented by the Processing Unit or the MPLP article and literature. Both interviewees felt that MPLP had been 'forced upon the institution.' A sentiment similar to that of Records Processing Staff, voiced during the group sessions outlined earlier. Overall, the two interviewed Reference Services staff acknowledged that MPLP would result in more collections being discoverable by researchers, as one noted that when records are in the backlog "...it's like it doesn't exist to patrons" (Reference Services Interview, 2016). However, they saw the methodology as causing far more problems than benefits from the perspective of their unit.

One of the interviewees noted that the timing of the MPLP implementation was problematic. MPLP was implemented at the same time that many government record series were placed under blanket series level restrictions for concerns that some of the records might contain health or other personal information. MPLP would only exacerbate these restrictions as without file level inventories there would be no means to help identify whether the restricted information actually existed or that MPLP would inhibit the ability to restrict specific parts of these collections. This suggested that further consultation with other units within the Provincial Archives would have been beneficial before implementing these procedures.

The Reference Services respondents identified several major issues caused by minimally processed collections. The lack of file and item level control caused concern over the security of records as no indication would be available that files or items had gone missing, but also the ability of staff to return records to their proper place after they were used was compromised. They both complained that this lack of control caused a major impact upon the ability of staff to find and retrieve information for patrons from collections. They noted that reviews for restricted records and access issues were made more difficult and time consuming, especially on very large and popular collections such as the records of former Premiers. Finally, they noted that MPLP caused major problems with records transfers for patron access between the Regina and Saskatoon office. Transfers for these collections became so time consuming and had such large volumes of records that on many occasions staff chose to cancel them and require researchers to travel to where the collections were held; negating the primary benefit of having offices in two locations in the province.

In relation to these issues, the two interviewees had observed that patrons found MPLP collections difficult to understand and use. This was especially notable where users were comparing older finding aids from collections with more file and item detail. In particular, they argued that most patrons primarily wanted to view file lists and do not understand why we refer to collections as 'processed' when they lack these inventories. Without these lists one respondent argued that Reference Services staff was at times "...forced to do research for the client." (Reference Services Interview, 2016).

The two Reference Services interviewees had several recommendations to change MPLP procedures. They advocated that all processed records include a file listing including file titles and dates of file folders as these were necessary to address patron demand and the control issues noted above. They further argued that in some instances item level listing would be desirable, notably for large photograph collections. They noted that photograph rehousing should be mandatory as it was not always possible for Reference Services staff to know that a box of records contained photographs or to give patrons the cotton gloves necessary to handle these items if they were unsleeved.<sup>28</sup>

The Reference Services interviewees were also able to comment on some of the alternate means of implementing MPLP. They strongly disagreed with the notion of providing access to unprocessed records by putting accession records online. One commented that this would amount to "false advertising" as the collection would not be truly accessible and without a privacy review the records may not necessarily be open for access in the first place (Reference Services Interview, 2016). Both respondents expressed reservations over delaying additional processing work until sufficient demand for collections existed. They noted procedures would have to be established in order to track this information and that the Records Processing Unit would have to become much more responsive to this demand. They both noted that this method penalized the first few researchers for a collection as they would have to wait for this work to be done or conduct research without these 'necessary' extra tools

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<sup>28</sup> Most archives require patrons and staff to wear cotton gloves while handling photographic prints and negatives to avoid damage to the emulsions.

(Ibid). They expressed more approval for developing criteria to conduct additional processing work, but both remained adamant that file inventories should be considered a mandatory part of all processing.

The interviews with Reference Services suggested that the minimal processing being conducted at the Provincial Archives has caused several problems. However, it should be noted that processing may not always be able to fully meet the needs of every patron nor can it necessarily solve all of the problems of reference staff. The staff of Reference Services may also be presenting answers biased towards reducing their own workload, and not necessarily be focused upon the overall goals of the institution. Despite this possibility, the interviews did demonstrate the value that file level inventories can present to both staff and patrons. Surprisingly this puts the upper level work being conducted under minimal processing more into question than the value of lower level work. Further, several of the implementations in the literature review suggested that many institutions still create file lists while conducting minimal processing, emphasizing their importance.

The evidence from the interviews suggest that if minimal processing work is to continue more consultation is required with Reference Services and likely other units. In particular consultation is needed to ensure that where additional work is required that this need is identified, and processes are in place to facilitate this at a later date. Buy in for minimal processing is required by the Reference Unit in particular, so they are prepared for the additional workload and issues that would result if these additional tools are not available immediately. Records Processing would need to become more responsive and flexible in its approach to avoid some of the problems experienced by other units. Finally, processes would likely have to change to accommodate the reality of minimal processing in the reading room. Some of the case studies discussed tools such as a stamp stating ‘Contains Photos’ to identify boxes containing unsleeved photographs, or file retrieval cards to ensure patrons refile folders or items properly within boxes. The reality of MPLP and minimal processing is that it needs to be perceived and implemented as an institutional approach to the problem of the backlog and not just that of a single unit. This does seem to fit with the original intent of the proposed MPLP program, however, no additional input or evaluation was ever conducted. This may largely be owing to the turnover at the Manager position within the Records Processing Unit, with 5 different individuals in the position since the implementation of the program in 2009. Without consistent leadership behind the program, much of the original intent behind its implementation did not occur.

### **5.3 MPLP and the Backlog: The Current State**

The Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan decided to implement minimal processing procedures in 2009 largely to address the growth of the unprocessed records backlog. Therefore, to determine if these procedures are efficient we can examine the present state of the backlog to see if the MPLP program has met its objective. In order to conduct this analysis, we must first examine how the backlog was first assessed.

Each of the original three backlog assessments in 1998, 2006, and 2008 analyzed the time to complete work on the unprocessed records based on metrics established by the Canadian Council of Archives (CCA). These guidelines are presently unavailable on the Council’s website, however, the Saskatchewan

Council of Archives and Archivists does include them as an appendix to a grant writing document. The guidelines define the suggested time frames for archival work on a wide variety of formats (CCA Time Guidelines for Arrangement and Description Projects in Avery, O'Brien, and Hart, 2012, 4-6). The CCA figures are based upon an 8-hour work day. From this we can extrapolate specific metrics for the amount of time required to process a metre of records or a specific item, or the amount of metres/items that can be processed within a specific unit of time.

Figure 1 is based on the average time estimated to process the various formats of records from the CCA guidelines. This has been further extrapolated to estimate the average amount of time in days or hours to process one unit of record for each media type. Figure 2 uses a similar methodology but has extrapolated the CCA guidelines to estimate the average number of records by media type that can be processed in either one day or one hour. Both these tables suggest huge variances in the time required to process records depending on the format. This large variance is a known problem within archives and has resulted in some debate within the profession over measures of processing efficiency. Apart from the CCA guidelines no other standards of measure exist for the processing of archival records, and even within the MPLP literature all metrics are measured only for one media type, textual records. This represents a major shortcoming of the profession that should be the subject of much future study.

**FIGURE 1: CCA AVERAGE TIME ESTIMATES FOR 1 UNIT OF RECORDS**

<b>Record Format</b>	<b>Time</b>
1 Metre of textual records	2.67 days or 21.36 hours
1 Photograph	0.055 days or 0.44 hours
1 Audiovisual record (60 minute run time)	0.5 days or 4 hours
1 Architectural or Cartographic record	0.16 days or 1.28 hours (76.8 minutes)

**FIGURE 2: CCA DAILY AND HOURLY WORK ESTIMATES BY RECORD TYPE**

<b>Media Type</b>	<b>Records Completed in 1 day</b>	<b>Records Completed in 1 Hour</b>
Textual Records	0.375 metres	0.047 metres
Photographic Records	18.2 items	2.27 items
Audio-visual Records	2 items	0.25 items
Architectural or Cartographic Records	6.25 items	0.78 items

At the Provincial Archives each backlog assessment estimated the total volume of records for each format primarily from data found in accession records.<sup>29</sup> This was then applied to the metrics above to provide the estimated person years of work required. A person year was assumed to be 250 working days. It should be noted that additional processing work such as the creation of authority records, was left out of this estimate.<sup>30</sup> This calculation also assumes that the time estimates created by the CCA were on average correct for most records. Without the detailed analysis used to establish these guidelines it is difficult to determine their appropriateness. However, they do provide some basis for backlog analysis and comparison over time that points toward the efficiency of MPLP methods, as even if the assumptions behind this person year estimate are incorrect they can still provide a means of comparison with each format and point to a reduction or increase in the overall volume of work required to address the backlog.

To calculate the effectiveness of minimal processing we must determine the present state of the backlog. If MPLP was effective a reduction should theoretically have taken place. The former method of calculating the total volume of unprocessed records by consulting accession records would be very time consuming. Instead the Provincial Archives now regularly reports the total size of its holdings as part of an annual statistical report to the National, Provincial and Territorial Archives Conference. A summary of these statistics from 2008 until 2014 is available in Figure 3.

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<sup>29</sup> The accession records at the provincial archives contain estimates on the total extent in metres of a collection as well as rough counts of the number of items by format. It should be noted that these records are not always totally accurate but that they typically under estimate the total extent of records. Further, some additional appraisal or 'weeding' of material does often occur while processing when Records Processing Staff use methods other than MPLP which can further impact the precision of these figures.

<sup>30</sup> An authority record is an extra descriptive record created documenting the history of an organization or individual. This can differ from the historical information found within record descriptions as these latter histories tend to focus upon the content available within the record collection and not necessarily a complete history of the creator. These records do represent an additional descriptive workload for the Records Processing Unit and this work was originally estimated in 1998 as being an additional 14.5 person years.

**FIGURE 3: PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES TOTAL HOLDINGS FROM NPTAC REPORTS<sup>32</sup>**

Year	Textual Records (Metres)	Maps, Plans, & Drawings	Graphic Material (Photographs)	Hours of Audio/Visual Records (hours)
2008	24,806	101,885	1,412,746	30360
2009	26,804	103,068	1,579,413	39,513
2010	26,287	103,141	1,587,685	39,452
2011	27,872	106,388	1,610,018	40,834
2012	28,397	106,500	1,633,300	42,054
2013	28,915	106,543	1,645,552	43,601
2014	29,345	107,398	1,749,630	46,614

To calculate the total growth of the backlog over time the last total backlog volume calculation from 2008 was used as a baseline. This report estimated the Provincial archives backlog had 6,116 metres of textual records, 991 maps/plans/drawings, 601,475 graphic material records, and 9,153 hours of audio-visual records (Putz, Stoffel, and Yewman, 2008). From this baseline the difference in volume recorded in the NPTAC annual statistical reports was calculated for every year. This information is described in Figure 4, it should be noted these figures represent the total holdings of both processed and unprocessed records at the Provincial Archives. The large variation in media type that has been added to the holdings is largely due to the high variation in formats residing within different archival collections. Archival records by their nature will vary greatly in quantity and the variety of formats depending on the creator, and as such the figures vary greatly depending on what was acquired and from whom.

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<sup>32</sup> These numbers are largely determined by adding the extent of records acquired by the archives annually that is listed in accession records and adding it to a previous baseline of the total volume of records in the holdings of the Provincial Archives. Accession records contain rough measurements of textual records in metres, and counts of items by format within a collection. Please note that for some reports figures had to be extrapolated in particular the audio-visual records were estimated as 60 minutes per item where actual item extents could not be determined.

**FIGURE 4: THE ANNUAL INCREASE IN HOLDINGS AT THE PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES**

Year	Textual Records (Metres)	Maps, Plans, & Drawings	Graphic Material (Photographs)	Hours of Audio/Visual Records (hours)
2009	1,998	1,183	166,667	9,153
2010	23	73	8,272	29
2011	1,045	3,247	22,333	1,292
2012	525	112	23,282	1,220
2013	518	43	12,252	1,547
2014	430	855	104,078	3,013

The annual increase in the holdings of the Provincial Archives is not a reflection of the growth of the backlog. Missing from this is the work of the Records Processing Unit to decrease the backlog itself. Figure 5 is comprised of the annual statistical reports of the Processing Unit from 2008 until 2014. The statistics show a great variation as depending on the collections processed, there is a great variation in the format and volume of material that is worked on. In some years collections containing more records of a specific media are processed than in others. As well, staffing levels have varied over time particularly as funds and grants have fluctuated.

**FIGURE 5: RECORDS PROCESSING UNIT ANNUAL STATISTICS**

Year	Textual Records (metres)	Maps, Plans, & Drawings	Graphic Material (photographs)	Audio-Visual Records (Hours)	Processing Staff (Full Time Equivalent)
2008	441	86	2,506	102.75	8
2009	222.4	998	5,379	420.75	5.5
2010	117.4	592	16,670	163.5	6
2011	63.5	801	27,456	510	5
2012	52.4	509	32,584	49.5	3.5
2013	234	1,987	1,235	28.5	4.5
2014	114.5	330	8,823	1,247.25	4.5

Figure 6 contains figures for the actual volume of the backlog for each of the main formats of records at the Provincial Archives. These figures start with the 2008 baseline for the backlog established during the last backlog report and add the growth in the total holdings from the NPTAC reports minus the processing statistics of the Records Processing Unit. The total volume of records in the backlog as of 2015 is estimated as being 9,851 metres of textual records, 1,287 maps, plans and drawings, 846,212 graphic items and 22,083 hours of audio visual records. Figure 6 shows that the backlog is growing annually for every format of record with the exception of maps, plans and drawings. The fluctuations in this later category are primarily owing to several large architectural collections acquired and later processed by the institution during the last few years. Further, the varying output of the Processing Unit is not surprising given the fluctuation in staff over time.

**FIGURE 6: THE PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES OF SASKATCHEWAN BACKLOG STATISTICS**

Year	Textual Records (metres)	Maps, Plans, & Drawings	Graphic Material (photographs)	Audio-Visual Records (Hours)
2008	6,116	991	601,475	8,249
2009	7,892	1,176	762,763	16,981
2010	7,797	657	754,365	16,846
2011	8,779	3,103	749,242	17,628
2012	9,251	2,706	739,940	18,799
2013	9,535	762	750,957	20,317
2014	9,851	1,287	846,212	22,083

While the volume of records has certainly increased a more clearer picture of the growth of the backlog emerges when determining the scope of the backlog in terms of person years. After applying the CCA guidelines we can estimate that the 2014 backlog represents approximately 336.2 person years of work.<sup>33</sup> The previous calculation in 2008 estimated the backlog as being 214.7 person years (Putz, Stoffel, and Yewman, 2008, 6). This means that since implementing MPLP the backlog has actually grown by 121.5 person years or by 20.3 person years on average annually after processing work is factored in.<sup>34</sup> Does this mean minimal processing methodologies are not efficient?

<sup>33</sup> Textual records were estimated at 105.07 person years, maps/plans were estimated at 0.82 person years, graphic material at 186.17 person years, and audio video records at 44.17 person years.

<sup>34</sup> The average was calculated based upon 6 years, (121.5/6).

As mentioned earlier the actual implementation of MPLP methods by the Records Processing Unit has been fairly mixed. Roughly half of the unit's annual workload is comprised of monetary appraisals requiring additional levels of work, and other unrelated projects have also affected this. As well, the actual minimal processing implementation has varied at times with file inventories and other tools being added. Staffing levels have also varied over time depending on grants and other available funds. We can now compare the output of the unit using CCA processing metrics to estimate the actual performance of the unit in person years versus the actual staffing levels to point to the efficiency of Records Processing.

Figure 7 calculates the person years' worth of work by media type done by the Records Processing Unit based on the annual statistics and the CCA guidelines for pre and post MPLP implementation years. The total work completed by the unit in person years is totaled in the 'Total Processing Work in Person Years' column. This gives a sense of the performance of the unit annually in terms of the number of person years' worth of work that has been completed in a given year. The table next includes the actual staffing levels of the unit, which have declined over time. Finally, the efficiency of the unit was determined by subtracting the actual staffing levels from the total processing work in person years. This is reflected in the final column of the table and was subdivided between the pre and post MPLP implementation. The variance in the expected output versus the actual staffing levels may be owing to the amount of material processed for monetary appraisal work, the number of other projects assigned that are not reflected in annual statistics, and due to the varying application of MPLP procedures. The pre-MPLP years indicate that the total efficiency of the unit (expected processing rates versus actual staffing levels) was -0.38. Meaning the unit underperformed the Canadian Council of Archives (CCA) rates by -0.38 person years. The post-MPLP implementation years indicate that the unit exceeded the expected CCA rates by 8.04 person years. In effect MPLP allowed the unit to gain the equivalent work of 8.04 staff persons. While the rates for 2009-2014 do fluctuate the overall gain in person years clearly shows an increase in efficiency at the unit since implementing the MPLP procedures. If Records Processing has generally been efficient in its work, why has the backlog grown so dramatically?

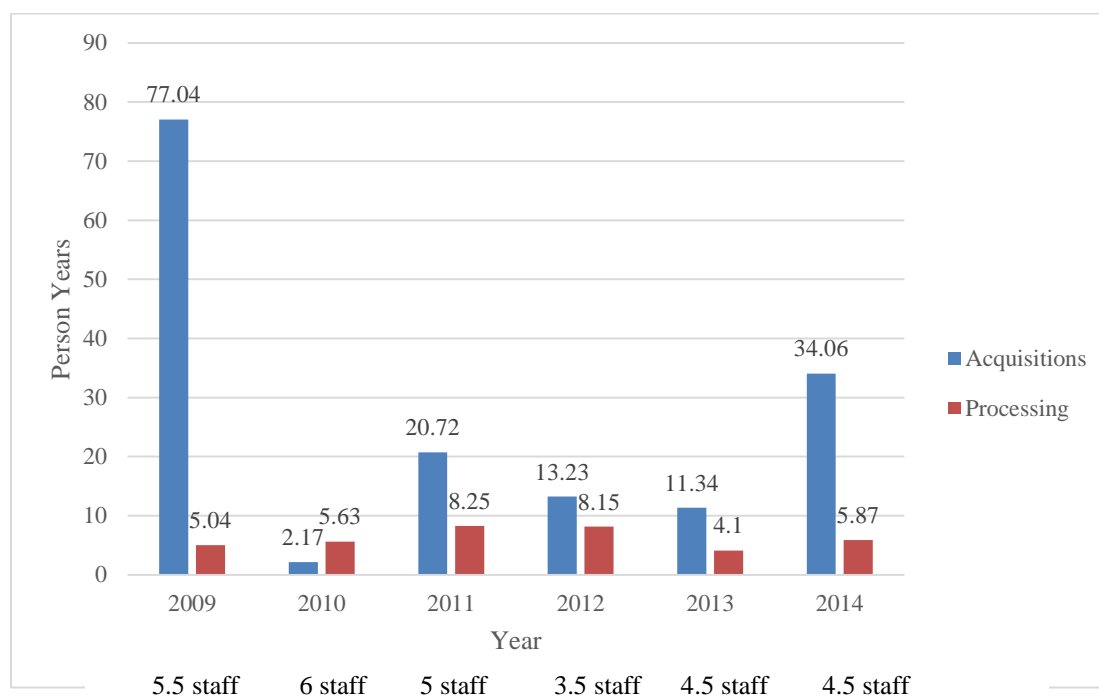
**FIGURE 7: RECORDS PROCESSING UNIT EFFICIENCY IN PERSON YEARS, EXPECTED PROCESSING WORK VERSUS ACTUAL STAFFING LEVELS<sup>36</sup>**

Year	Textual Records	Maps, Plans, Drawings	Graphic Material	Audio-Visual Records	Total Processing Work	Actual Staff (Full Time Equivalents)	Efficiency (Total Processing vs Actual Staff)
2005	2.3	0.14	0.65	2.36	5.46	6	-0.54
2006	2.17	0.01	1.13	3.46	6.77	6	0.77
2007	0.9	0.3	0.18	7.5	8.88	7	1.88
2008	4.70	0.05	0.55	0.21	5.51	8	-2.49
Pre-MPLP Total							<b>-0.38</b>
2009	2.37	0.64	1.18	0.84	5.04	5.5	-0.46
2010	1.25	0.38	3.67	0.33	5.63	6	-0.37
2011	0.68	0.51	6.04	1.02	8.25	5	3.25
2012	0.56	0.33	7.17	0.10	8.15	3.5	4.65
2013	2.50	1.27	0.27	0.06	4.10	4.5	-0.40
2014	1.22	0.21	1.94	2.49	5.87	4.5	1.37
Post-MPLP Total							<b>8.04</b>

<sup>36</sup> Please note that since 2008 the unit has had both a Manager and Database Manager position which do not typically process records, as such these two positions have been removed from the total staff estimate. Partial staff persons reflect staff hired on term positions for part of the year. The Actual Staffing category was determined by examining Organizational Charts and consulting unit staff. The Records Processing Unit was established in 2005, and attempting to determine annual processing statistics and the number of staff prior to this was not possible. Based on annual report statistics in 2005 the unit processed 215.95 metres of textual records, 225 maps/plans/drawings, 2967 graphic items and 1179 hours of audio video material. In 2006 203 metres of textual records, 21 maps/plans/drawings, 5146 graphic items, and 1729 hours of audio video material was processed. Finally in 2007 84.5 metres of textual records, 475 maps/plans/drawings, 823 graphic items and 3749 hours of audio video material was processed. See figure 5 for statistics from 2008-2014.

The annual acquisition of records of the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan greatly exceeds the present capacity of the Records Processing Unit to keep pace. This trend has resulted in the overall growth of the backlog at the institution. Figure 8 graphs the annual acquisitions of material in person years against the material processed in person years. The graph shows that only in 2010 was the Processing Unit able to not only keep pace but exceed the rate of what was coming in. However, during most years acquisition growth exceeded processing rates often by a significant margin. As both Figure 7 and 8 have shown, staffing levels within the Records Processing Unit have fluctuated over time, this directly affects the ability of the unit to keep pace with the amount of material acquired. While some efficiency gains have been demonstrated since implementing MPLP, Figure 8 clearly shows that the Processing unit will only be able to keep pace with acquisitions with a considerable increase in staffing levels. With this increase being highly unlikely, the Provincial Archives likely needs to address the amount of material being acquired in order to actually address its backlog of unprocessed records.

**FIGURE 8: ACQUISITIONS VERSUS PROCESSING IN PERSON YEARS<sup>37</sup>**



<sup>37</sup> The large fluctuations in material acquired is reflective of several variables, and is difficult to estimate the expected annual acquisition rates because of this. For instance in 2009 the archives acquired a large amount of shelving and storage space after previously restricting all acquisitions in the previous two years. This resulted in a large influx of acquired material in that year. The available shelving space continued to affect the amount of material that could be acquired annually. Further, the staffing levels of the Appraisal and Acquisition unit (which have varied over time) have affected these numbers due to their ability to collect material from both the Saskatchewan Government and the private sector. Finally, the material acquired varies to a large degree depending on the extent of collections acquired themselves, in some years a large amount was donated in others smaller amounts depending on the collection itself.

## 5.4 MPLP and the Backlog: The Future State

We shall next examine how the Records Processing Unit might be able to keep pace or exceed the rate of acquisitions and address the backlog. If the Processing Unit were to fully implement minimal processing what rates would be possible? To analyze this we must extrapolate some of the MPLP metrics from the literature review compared with the CCA rates. The literature review demonstrated that while the MPLP authors argued for a 4 hour per foot rate, (Meissner and Greene, 2005), institutions were able to reduce this amount with rates ranging from 0.42 hours per foot to a high of 5.33 hours per foot (Weidemann, 2006, 277, 281). However some of these rates were specific to a single collection and not necessarily an institutional average. When examining the numbers, the average reported metric was approximately 2 hours per foot of records.<sup>38</sup> In addition, the most efficient average was achieved by the Kansas Historical Society at 0.75 hours per foot (Gorzalski and Wiget, 2011, 11). Their implementation focused upon very minimal processing as they primarily created only basic descriptions and avoided all arrangement and rehousing work where possible (Ibid).

To compare the MPLP rates with the CCA guidelines they must be translated into metres/hour.<sup>39</sup> Figure 9 charts the processing rates along with the estimated percentage increase over the standard Canadian Council of Archives processing metrics. The Michael Swift and Associates estimate of a 40% reduction by focusing only on upper level description is also included (Swift, et al, 1998). The chart suggests that significant efficiencies could be achieved by adopting some of the MPLP methods of other institutions. Notably adjusting procedures to the minimal processing methods used by the Kansas Historical Society could see a potential 855% increase in processing productivity. More realistic estimates would suggest that modifying the processing procedures to those used by the majority of institutions implementing MPLP (a more average implementation) could result in closer to a 316% increase based on the average rates those institutions were able to achieve. These numbers, however, are specific to metrics designed for textual records and can not necessarily be applied universally to the entire backlog of records at the Provincial Archives.<sup>40</sup> If these methods were employed what would the new backlog figure be?

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<sup>38</sup> See footnote 22 of this report, the metrics in hours/foot were: 2; 0.75; 2; 4; 1.62; 0.76; 0.97; 5.33; 0.417; 2.6. The average of these numbers was 2.035 hours per foot, rounded up to 2 hours per foot for simplicity.

<sup>39</sup> For comparisons sake the CCA metrics can be extrapolated to a rate of approximately 6.5 hours per metric foot of textual records and the 40% reduction suggested by the 1998 Michael Swift and Associates report to the Provincial Archives would amount to a rate of 4.6 hours per metric foot.

<sup>40</sup> While the CCA metrics do suggest a common unit of measure between all formats of records, time, it becomes difficult to extrapolate how this measure could be applied to other metrics. In particular the Kansas Historical Society's implementation and other high level MPLP implementations conduct little to no item level work. Meaning that attempts to determine the equivalent efficiency increases of these methods for other formats would not be accurate.

**FIGURE 9: PROCESSING METHODS IN METRES/HOUR**

Method	Metres/hour	Metres/Day	Metres/Year (250 day work year)	Percentage Increase over CCA
CCA Metrics	0.047	0.38	95	n/a
Provincial Archives estimated reduction 40%	0.066	0.53	132.5	40%
MPLP 4hours/foot target	0.0762	0.61	152.5	62%
Actual Implementation average of 2hours/foot MPLP	0.1498	1.2	300	316%
Kansas Society Historical rate of 0.75 hours/foot	0.4064	3.25	812.5	855%

To determine how these metrics would impact the backlog we must apply them to the 2014 total backlog of textual records which was estimated to be 9,851 metres. We must also add the extra 14.5 years estimated for authority record production to this total. We can further calculate under present staffing levels how quickly the backlog of textual records could be addressed. However, we also need to account for the annual accumulation of new material while this work on the backlog is occurring. This was calculated to be 757 metres of new records acquired annually on average.<sup>41</sup> This average accumulation must be added for each year spent processing the textual record backlog to obtain the total estimated years it would take existing processing staff to address the present and future backlog.

Figure 10 highlights the efficiencies of the various processing methods in respect to textual records. Using the existing staff compliment of 4, it calculates the number of years to address the 2015 backlog of textual records as well as the expected annual growth in the backlog while that occurs. The final column estimates the total time to address the existing and expected future backlog. The chart demonstrates that to complete processing work for the 2015 backlog and all additional textual records added to the backlog during that time would take a maximum of 90.2 years using CCA metrics with the existing staff of 4 persons; and at best 8.2 years using the Kansas Historical Society's method and

<sup>41</sup> In 2009 the archives added 1998 metres to its' holdings; 23 metres in 2010; 1045 in 2011; 525 metres in 2012; 518 metres in 2013; and 430 metres in 2014. The average of these numbers was calculated to be 757 metres

existing staff. While other formats of records are excluded, this is often intentional as methods such as those employed by the Kansas Historical Society; focus upon collections as a whole leaving the item level work required for non-textual records for future projects or purposely excluding it altogether.

**FIGURE 10: EFFECT OF PROCESSING METHODS ON PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES TEXTUAL RECORD BACKLOG, 2015**

Method	Total # Years of work +14.5	Years to Process with 4 staff	Total growth over time in years	Total Annual growth in years with 4 staff	Total years to complete processing with 4 staff
CCA	119.6	29.9	241.4	60.3	<b>90.2</b>
40% reduction	89.6	22.4	129.1	32.3	<b>54.7</b>
MPLP 4 hours per foot	79.1	19.8	98.3	24.6	<b>44.4</b>
Avg MPLP 2 hours per foot	47.4	11.8	29.9	7.5	<b>19.3</b>
Kansas Historical 0.75 per foot	26.6	6.7	6.2	1.5	<b>8.2</b>

Applying the procedures and metrics highlighted in the literature review does appear to have a noticeable effect upon the backlog of records at the Provincial Archives. While these estimates only apply to the backlog of textual records, they do show possible processes to improve existing procedures. However, the most efficient procedures rely upon conducting only high level descriptive work with little to no supplementary descriptive/control tools. These types of methods were argued to be problematic by Reference Services staff who further noted they are also undesirable for archival patrons.

The present implementation of MPLP minimal processing at the Saskatchewan Archives has not proven to be efficient. The objective of this program was to reduce the backlog of records at the institution; however, the backlog has actually increased over this time. This has largely occurred due to an externality not factored into the design of the original program, the annual acquisition of additional material. These acquisition rates have been shown to be too large for present staff within the Processing Unit to keep pace with, particularly using existing methods. During the past 6 years the backlog on average grew by 20.3 person years even after the work of Records Processing Staff was factored in.

Meaning to keep pace with acquisitions would require an additional 20 full time and one half time staff persons.

The literature has suggested that a more balanced approach to processing that allows for some efficiency and some effectiveness may be possible. The clearest implementation of this has occurred at the University of California Libraries where minimal processing is considered the basic minimum approach, but ranked criteria were also created to justify any additional work that is completed. Using this method this institution was still able to achieve processing rates similar to the average MPLP metric. This means of implementing MPLP would allow the Records Processing Unit to be more efficient while taking into account some of the effectiveness concerns of other units at the institution.

The University of California Libraries were able to achieve a 2 hour per foot rate for textual record processing, which is also the average rate most other institutions were able to achieve with MPLP as noted in Figure 10 (Bachli, Eason, Light, McAnnaney, Morrison and Seubert, 2012, 22). On average the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan adds 757 metres of textual records to its holdings annually.<sup>42</sup> If the University of California processing rates could be achieved, the Provincial Archives would require 2.5 full time staff persons to keep pace with the incoming textual records.<sup>43</sup> At present staffing levels this would leave 1.5 staff persons to address other formats as well as work on the backlog. This method would not only allow the Provincial Archives to keep pace with incoming material, but to gradually reduce the backlog of records. While this new implementation of MPLP methods is not adequate to make major progress on the backlog it does represent a significant increase in efficiency that should also deal with some of the shortcomings of the present MPLP procedures in place at the institution.

For minimal processing procedures to reduce the records backlog, additional change is required at the Saskatchewan Archives. Limiting or reducing the annual acquisition of material may be one aspect to consider. The MPLP authors do also acknowledge this is an important consideration, arguing that archivists should become far more selective when acquiring material, and stop the practice of accepting all material and focus only on what they deem to be the most important records refusing to collect unnecessary supplementary material (Meissner and Greene, 2010). This approach does entail some risk as the bias of the archivists would affect the collections preserved, but it might be required in the face of the growing size of record collections in the digital age. Further, current record collections in the backlog may benefit from reappraisal to help reduce the scope of the problem and ensure less important material does not take up valuable processing time.

Alongside this initiative, however, MPLP processing procedures presently in place would also have to be adapted, and the intensive work of monetary appraisal would have to halt. This latter change could impact upon relations with donors as some have demanded this form of compensation before donating records. Monetary appraisal processing requires additional work only to suit the needs of the monetary

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<sup>42</sup> See Figure 4 for an indication of the annual growth of holdings.

<sup>43</sup> 757 metres acquired annually divided by 300 metres processed annually (University of California metric extrapolated to a 250 day work year) equals 2.5 staff persons.

appraisal itself, and this work is not necessarily efficient or even effective in terms of the needs of the institution, users or the records themselves. Presently monetary appraisal represents approximately half of the processing work of the unit annually. From an efficiency perspective the productivity of the unit is considerably reduced, in effect only 2 of the 4 processing staff are able to apply the most efficient processing methods available. While the processing conducted for monetary appraisal does reduce the backlog, figures vary considerably as to the processing rates achieved when conducting this work. Conservative estimates would suggest that the workload would double for monetary appraisal processing compared to MPLP processing. In terms of staffing this would in effect reduce the unit conservatively by one staff person annually due to the inefficiency of the processing work being done. Meaning that after the inefficiency of monetary appraisal is taken into account the unit is effectively reduced to three processing staff.

As mentioned previously in this report, Provincial Archives staff have assumed minimal processing methods are not suitable for collections undergoing monetary appraisal. This assumption is based on two main reasons. The first is the desire to provide as detailed and controlled a collection as possible to reduce the time and therefore the costs for external appraisal consultants to assess collections. The second assumption is that monetary appraisals factor in the life span of records when assessing value which is affected by the item level rehousing work conducted while processing.<sup>44</sup> The Provincial Archives should test these assumptions more fully by piloting minimal processing for collections undergoing monetary appraisal. This will require additional budgetary funds to address the extra time spent assessing collections by consultants. As well, the archives may need to seek a legal opinion about any liability the institution may be exposed to if the best possible appraisal value is not provided to donors based upon the actions of the Provincial Archives staff's processing work. If this later aspect is not advisable, the Provincial Archives should only conduct item level rehousing and preservation work and limit descriptive and control activities to ensure a more efficient approach.

Streamlining monetary appraisal work will provide some savings to the institution. Even though additional direct costs will be required to hire external consultants, the institution will see indirect savings. A full time position will be restored for processing work as the most efficient methods for processing would be used for all collections. The unit is composed of positions classified from level 3 to level 8 within the Saskatchewan Government Employees Union. The average position with the unit would be a level 5 with an average salary rate of \$23.63/hour according to 2015 rates (Saskatchewan Government Employees Union, 2012). Annually this amounts to approximately \$49,401 in salary and benefits that would be saved in processing labor.<sup>45</sup> Rough estimates would suggest that the costs of external consultants would double. The average appraisal budget for the past five years was \$6,320.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Monetary appraisal consultants hired by the Provincial Archives have confirmed this later assumption during informal discussions in 2013 and 2015.

<sup>45</sup> Benefits were calculated at 17.7% as per Provincial Archives staffing recommendations

<sup>46</sup> The monetary appraisal budgets were taken from internal financial statements. The budgets for the previous 5 years are as follows: 2015 \$13,000; 2014 \$6,600; 2013 \$3,500; 2012 \$3,000; 2011 \$5,500

Doubling this amount would suggest costs of \$12,640 to conduct monetary appraisals. Meaning a net savings of \$36,761 in indirect labour costs could be achieved by using minimal processing for monetary appraisal collections. Further, the institution could consider training staff to conduct monetary appraisal assessment to save on some of these direct costs. This practice is currently in place at the Archives of Ontario (Sanagan, 2015). This suggests major savings for the institution by streamlining or potentially eliminating monetary appraisal work. While stopping the practice altogether might be the most desirable approach based solely on efficiency, this could entail the loss of some high profile collections and political ramifications for the institution if donors complain if the monetary appraisal service is no longer offered.

The current implementation of MPLP has been shown to not be efficient or effective for the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan. Modifying the procedures and changing some of the other practices at the institution including monetary appraisal processing can address the efficiency issues. As was shown above, this can even be estimated to produce indirect savings for the institution. However, further analysis is required to estimate the costs for addressing the effectiveness issues with MPLP. We shall now examine what the estimated costs for conducting extra processing work are for the Provincial Archives.

## **5.5 The Cost of Additional Processing Work**

In 2015 the Records Processing Unit was asked to conduct additional processing work on a particular collection, the Globe Theatre fonds. This collection had been processed sometime earlier, however, the theatrical group was celebrating an anniversary in 2015 and the collection had experienced a large increase in use. The Processing Unit had previously completed processing the collection using MPLP methods and had supplemented this with a file inventory along with a rough count of non-textual items in each file. However, the unit had not provided file numbers or item numbers for the collection, nor had any item rehousing been conducted. Reference Services staff found the collection problematic to work with. In particular, they found it difficult to respond to one very large photograph reproduction request. This request had taken a staff person approximately three work days to complete and prompted the unit to request additional processing work be conducted.

To remedy the situation, the Records Processing Unit assigned a staff member to complete the additional work. The staff person initially planned on assigning numbers to each of the files and to each of the items. However, a senior staff member at the Provincial Archives further directed the unit to rehouse the photographs and negatives within the collection in preservation sleeves and fully label the items. The senior staff person was not aware that the Records Processing Unit's MPLP procedures did not include the rehousing of non-textual records like photographs.<sup>47</sup> This person argued that this was a necessary preservation step. The fact that senior staff was unaware of the work being completed under

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<sup>47</sup> It should be noted, however, that the Provincial Archives MPLP procedures are inconsistent when it comes to rehousing graphic material with one section recommending that graphic material within textual collections be rehoused but the section specific to graphic material noting that rehousing will not occur.

MPLP raises some additional issues about the adoption of these processes within the institution and the communication of the work being completed.

The Records Processing staff person began the project in the summer of 2015 and tracked all supplies as well as time spent on the project to provide estimates for similar future project work. The staff person recorded a total of 520 hours on the project, and estimated that approximately 85% of this time was spent conducting item level processing work, while 15% was spent assigning and labeling numbers on the file folders. (Mohr, 2016, 2, 4). The total cost of supplies for the project was estimated at \$4,801.55.<sup>48</sup> From these estimates we can determine some of the costs to the institution.

The Processing staff person was employed at the Saskatchewan Government Employee Union rate of a level 3 clerk. The average wages of a clerk are \$20.64/hour, meaning the labour costs with benefits amounted to \$12,632.50 (Saskatchewan Government Employees Union, 2012).<sup>49</sup> The total cost of labour and supplies to supplement the work on the collection was \$17,434.06. We can further divide the cost given the type of work conducted.

The Clerk estimated that only 15% of the time was spent supplementing the file inventory. The cost for this aspect of the project based on the 2015 hourly rate are estimated at \$1,894.88. Further we know the collection comprised 3,979 file folders and 33.95 metres of textual records. Given this rate we can calculate that the file level labeling and descriptive work cost the institution \$0.48/folder or \$55.82/metre. However, this project only supplemented existing file inventories and labels created earlier. Conservative estimates would suggest that these costs, primarily for labour, would double or triple depending on the level of work conducted for all file level inventory and labeling work. Further study will be required to determine the actual institutional costs for file level work.

The item level work included numbering, labeling, and rehousing of non-textual records. This aspect of the project was estimated to take 85% of the project time, or an estimated \$10,737.63 at 2015 wage rates. With the added supply expenses, the total cost of the item level processing was estimated at \$15,539.18. The collection was comprised of 18,669 photographs and negatives. We can therefore estimate a cost of \$0.83 per photograph/negative to fully label and rehouse these items for this project.

Statistics also exist for the previous processing work that was completed. This work was conducted by a level 8 Archivist with an average wage of \$29.76 (Saskatchewan Government Employees Union, 2012). Project statistics estimated that it took approximately 341.5 hours to complete for an estimated labour cost of \$11,961.90 including benefits. This means the total project cost for all work on the Globe Theatre fonds amounted to an estimated \$29,395.96. Was the additional \$17,434.06 worth of work completed on the collection worthwhile?

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<sup>48</sup> The supplies estimate was obtained from equivalent prices for items from the major Canadian Archival Supplies provider Carr McLean on March 1, 2016.

<sup>49</sup> Benefits were estimated at 17.7% based on other salary calculations at the Provincial Archives

The supplementary work to this collection conducted during this project was in response to 3 days of work for a level 4 Reference Archivist. Based on an average wage of \$21.88/hour the cost for the retrieval amounted to \$618.07 for labour including benefits (Saskatchewan Government Employees Union, 2012). When comparing the costs (\$17,434.06) against the benefits (the possible labour savings of \$618.07) we can determine it would take approximately 28.2 large retrieval/reproduction requests (estimated at 3 days of work each) to recoup the additional expense of this work. For smaller retrievals, we could estimate a daily savings rate of \$206.02 (\$618.07/3). The Provincial Archives would recoup the added processing expense after an estimated 84.6 small retrievals/reproduction requests (estimated at 1 day of staff time each) from the collection.<sup>50</sup> While it is doubtful that the Globe Theatre fonds will be this heavily used in the short term it is not inconceivable that this collection will receive this much public interest in the long term. This presents future models for study and means for recommending additional work based on expected use and staff requirements to facilitate this use.

An analysis of the preservation rehousing work conducted for the photographs and negatives provides a much clearer picture of the costs to the institution. As discussed earlier in the literature review, there is little evidence of the benefit of this rehousing work, particularly as compared with the benefits of a stable storage environment. The item level work conducted for this project was not exclusively done so for preservation purposes, as the relabeling and numbering of the photographs and negatives addressed shortcomings in the level of control established. However, we can assume the \$4,801.55 for supplies and a large proportion of the \$10,737.43 for labour were direct costs related specifically to preservation. With the actual benefit of this preservation work in question, we can assume this work will have questionable long term benefits or savings to the institution.

This project can provide some possible cost estimates for the backlog as well. The study suggested a cost of \$55.82 per metre of records for file folder processing that would conservatively have to double to \$111.64 to account for all file level work. Applying this number to the 2015 backlog estimate of 9,851 metres of records estimates a cost of \$1,099,765.64 for file level inventories for all unprocessed records.<sup>51</sup> The photograph rehousing, labeling, and listing estimates are likely more accurate, and come to \$0.83 per item. The 2015 backlog estimates the Provincial Archives has 846,212 graphic material items to process. The estimate for the labour and supplies to complete this work is \$702,355.96. It should be noted that both of these estimates are limited to supplementary project work, with much future study required to determine the full costs of all processing activities.

The other consideration to factor into this analysis is how this would affect the backlog in person years. File level work for this project was estimated at 78 hours.<sup>52</sup> If this amount were doubled to account for

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<sup>50</sup> Other Reference staff are employed at higher levels, primarily level 9 Archivists. The average wages for these staff is \$32.74. It would take approximately 18.9 large scale retrievals or 56.6 smaller retrievals to recoup the expenses of the additional processing work for labour costs of level 9 staff persons.

<sup>51</sup> This cost estimate is for labour only and would need to factor in inflationary increases over time.

<sup>52</sup> 15% of 520 total hours.

the previous work completed we arrive at an estimate of 156 hours for all file inventory work. With a total collection size of 33.95 metres we can estimate an approximate rate for file level work at 4.6 hours per metre. Applied to the 2015 backlog figure and with an estimated 250 day work year, this points to an additional 22.7 person years to the backlog to complete file inventory work for all records.<sup>53</sup>

The item level work was estimated at 442 hours.<sup>54</sup> The Globe Theatre fonds contains 18,669 photographs. We can then estimate a rate of 0.023 hours per photograph. Applied to the 2015 backlog of 846,212 graphic items with a 250 day person year we can estimate 9.7 person years to complete this work.<sup>55</sup>

The Globe Theatre project suggests several interesting trends for analysis. First it provides clear cost/benefit amounts associated with the additional work completed. From these we can provide some means of estimating the benefits of additional work based on the saved labour expenses required for reproduction and retrieval requests. However, estimating how soon this expense would actually be recouped, as well as precisely how many retrievals it would take and how often the collection might be retrieved is extremely difficult. Needless to say, it does point toward the value of creating some supplementary tools to facilitate this work. It may also point to the need for the Provincial Archives to greatly increase the cost of reproduction for archival records in order to recoup the expense of staff time involved to fulfill these requests under minimally processed collections. However, it should be noted that these higher costs could radically curtail demand. Further, it may point to the need for Reference Staff to limit the amount of time spent assisting patrons with collections, such as the specific hourly cap many other institutions have been forced to implement.

The Globe Theatre project allows for some methods to analyze potential costs for archival work. While additional study is required to estimate the costs of file level work particularly, some preliminary estimates are possible. Further, the data has suggested more specific costs for item level work, primarily regarding photograph rehousing, labeling, and indexing. Particularly, that much of these costs have little advantage for the institution as compared with the benefit of stable storage environments. The metrics and figures from this analysis can become a useful cost/benefit analysis tool to apply to future projects, and a means of better applying and utilizing institutional resources.

The Globe Theatre study also points to the overall impact the level of processing work can have upon an institution. The approximate estimates for file level work suggested a cost of more than \$1.1 million and an addition of 22.7 person years to the backlog. This latter figure is particularly troubling given the already ballooning size of the backlog and the inability to keep pace with annual acquisitions. Similar questions arise for the estimated \$0.7 million cost for photograph item level processing and the additional 9.7 person years this level of work would add to the existing backlog. Further, the

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<sup>53</sup>  $9851 \text{ metres} \times 4.6 \text{ hours/metre} = 45,314.6 \text{ hours} / 8 \text{ hours per day} = 5664.3 \text{ days} / 250 \text{ days per year} = 22.7 \text{ years}$

<sup>54</sup> 85% of 520 total hours.

<sup>55</sup>  $846,212 \text{ items} \times 0.023 \text{ hours/item} = 19,462.9 \text{ hours} / 8 \text{ hours per day} = 2432.9 \text{ days} / 250 \text{ days per year} = 9.7 \text{ years}$

preservation literature has suggested there is little empirical evidence as to the benefit of this rehousing work especially compared with the benefits of a stable storage environments. The costs in time, labour and supplies to conduct much of this work relate primarily to the work of one unit. When factoring in the savings for these initiatives recouped by other units, the costs of additional processing work is reduced over time and as retrievals increase. Ultimately, the high costs of additional processing work and its detrimental effect upon the backlog suggest that this additional work should be applied selectively and should not be the minimal standard for all processing work conducted at the Provincial Archives.

## **6.0 Discussion and Analysis**

This section will discuss the results of the findings and literature review in light of the principle question of the study, has the MPLP program been efficient and effective? It will conclude by discussing some of the options for changing the program.

### **6.1 The Effectiveness of MPLP**

The findings of this study have shown that MPLP methods are not necessarily effective for the Provincial Archives. The present procedures have caused several problems for the institution to cope with. The logic models pointed to several key goals of processing, access, control, and preservation not being fully met under the method. This was further confirmed with the interviews with Reference Services. These problems are not surprising as the literature identified several similar issues other institutions or critics of the methodology have had with the methods it employs. Three of this study's sub-questions directly relate to some of the MPLP concerns related to effectiveness.

#### **6.1.1 HAVE MPLP PROCEDURES AFFECTED ACCESSIBILITY?**

The logic model exercise found that access tools provided with MPLP processing were more limited than under traditional methods. The interviews with Reference Service pointed to patron and other institutional staff being dissatisfied with access to MPLP processed collections. The lack of file listings in particular seemed to be a major shortcoming with the current methods. The literature review found similar objections to MPLP. However, adherents to the method argue that accessibility is actually improved as more archival holdings are made accessible, even though MPLP does not typically allow for detailed searching within those collections. For the Provincial Archives, a more balanced approach may be needed, possibly with supplemental tools like file listings being conducted to help address some of MPLP's shortcomings with access.

#### **6.1.2 DOES MPLP ALLOW FOR ADEQUATE CONTROL OVER HOLDINGS?**

Once again both the logic model exercise and the interviews suggest that MPLP processing results in poor control over archival holdings. Similar to the MPLP critics from the literature review, there was significant concern over the staff time required to retrieve collections as well as collection security and risk of releasing confidential information. MPLP's adherents have argued that institutions should accept these risks or modify other procedures to better accommodate them. For the Provincial Archives these other procedural changes may be difficult to enact without the full buy in of other staff.

### **6.1.3 DOES MPLP ALLOW FOR PROPER PRESERVATION?**

While the logic model exercise and interviews both argued that MPLP preservation practices were inadequate, the literature review has suggested a different perspective. There is little direct empirical evidence for the benefit of more traditional practices such as preservation rehousing as compared with relying upon the physical environment. However, the lack of proper environmental control at the Provincial Archives may put this fundamental MPLP assumption to the test. Under the Provincial Archives storage conditions there may be some benefit to rehousing, however, the literature review has generally suggested this benefit would likely be limited compared with the benefits of gaining control over the physical environment. For non-textual formats, the literature further argued that reformatting would offer more benefit than preservation rehousing. Therefore, present MPLP methods may in fact be adequate despite the opinions of institutional staff.

## **6.2 The Efficiency of MPLP**

The results of this study have demonstrated that present processing methods at the Provincial Archives have been efficient increasing the expected processing output of the unit by 8.04 person years since the implementation of the procedures. However, other institutions have achieved far greater processing rates. This study has pointed out that not all records are processed using the method and that more training of staff within the unit may be required to fully utilize them and achieve the high levels of efficiency seen in some other institutions.

### **6.2.1 HAS MPLP AFFECTED THE BACKLOG OF UNPROCESSED RECORDS?**

The MPLP program at the Provincial Archives was not able to meet its original goal, to reduce the backlog of unprocessed records. In fact since enacting the program the backlog has actually increased from 214.7 person years in 2008 to 336.2 person years in 2014 (Putz, Stoffel and Yewman, 2008, 6). The statistical analysis pointed to other problems as causing the increase in the backlog of unprocessed records. In particular the annual acquisitions of new material is one of the most crucial factors that must be addressed in order for any progress on the backlog of unprocessed records to occur. As well staffing levels within the processing unit and the inefficiency of monetary appraisal processing seem to be additional factors in limiting the efficiency of the program and the ability to reduce the backlog. The literature review has suggested other institutions that have more fully embraced MPLP have seen far greater efficiencies than experienced at the Provincial Archives, suggesting further modifications to the program are required.

## **6.3 Possible Modifications to the MPLP Program**

The literature review has highlighted several possible methods for modifying the MPLP program at the provincial archives. The statistical analysis in section 5.4 of this report showed that revisions to the present program should allow for greater efficiencies to be achieved. Other institutions have attempted to address the effectiveness issues of MPLP by allowing for supplementary work to collections. Even institutions that allowed for this additional work have been able to achieve greater efficiencies than what the Provincial Archives has been able to realize. However, it should be noted that there can be great costs for this work, particularly if it is applied to all collections. The analysis of this additional work

in section 5.5 demonstrated it could cost as much as \$1.1 million dollars for file listings and \$0.7 million for item level work. As well, using current MPLP methods, this additional work could add an additional 32 person years' to the present backlog. The Provincial Archives should be mindful of finding a balance between efficiency and effectiveness in whatever processing method it chooses to pursue.

## **7.0 Options and Recommendations**

This study recommends several changes at the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan to address some of the problems with the MPLP method. But first we must examine the possible options available to the institution.

### **7.1 Options**

The Provincial Archives has three basic options available to consider regarding the MPLP program.

#### **7.1.1 KEEP THE EXISTING MPLP PROGRAM**

This study has shown the present MPLP implementation is not working effectively or as efficiently as it could. Some of the problems the institution has experienced with its present implementation could be addressed by additional staff training on the method as well as procedural changes to other units within the institution. However, this option would not eliminate all of the problems with the present program.

#### **7.1.2 ELIMINATE THE MPLP PROGRAM**

The effectiveness problems identified in this study could potentially be addressed by eliminating the MPLP program and returning to more traditional processing methods. However, traditional methods would be very inefficient and would allow for far greater backlog growth than if MPLP were to continue.

#### **7.1.3 MODIFY THE EXISTING MPLP PROGRAM**

The literature review demonstrated that there are numerous ways of adapting MPLP to suit the needs of the Provincial Archives. Some institutions have even managed to employ methods that could address some of the effectiveness problems identified in this study while still being highly efficient. Modifying the present implementation of this program would require several major changes to the practices within the Records Processing Unit as well as within other units in the institution. Balancing efficiency and effectiveness should be the goal of any modifications to MPLP.

### **7.2 Recommendations**

This report recommends modifying the existing MPLP program. It is the only way to address the problems with the present MPLP implementation with the need to address the growing backlog of unprocessed records. However, to fully address the efficiency and effectiveness requirements, several recommended changes are required within the Provincial Archives.

#### **7.2.1 RECOMMENDATION 1: IMPLEMENT A RATING SYSTEM FOR ARCHIVAL RECORDS**

This report has shown that the backlog of unprocessed records at the Saskatchewan Archives Board continues to grow at a staggering pace. Conducting traditional processing methods where all collections

receive file and item level work is not practical. However, this report has further found that there are significant issues in being inflexible in a processing approach. Some collections require additional work at either the file or item level as a basic means to facilitate access for patrons or to avoid major staff costs for retrievals.

The University of California Libraries provides a model approach to adapt to the many processing situations facing the Provincial Archives. This institution has developed specific criteria with a rating system for staff to analyze collections prior to and during processing. This rating system in turn is used to guide the processing decisions made. To ensure more objective decision making takes place it is recommended to have input from at least one other staff member when assigning a rating (Bachli, Eason, Light, McAnaney, Morrison, and Seubert, 2012).

To implement this method, the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan would have to make several procedural changes. The criteria for processing used by the University of California Libraries is a good starting point, but the rating system should be customized to the needs of the Provincial Archives. Units from across the institution should be consulted to develop the most appropriate criteria and priorities for the rating and the corresponding processing level. The criteria should include the historical value of the records; the estimated demand for the records; political considerations; the preservation needs of the records; the volume of the collection; and the likelihood the collection contains confidential information. Ideally an inter-unit committee composed of managers and staff persons from all of the units within the Provincial Archives will participate in the establishment of this rating system. The activities of this committee should become an operational goal for the 2016-17 year for each unit and it should be added to the 2016-2018 institutional strategic plan.

These systems should further be flexible allowing for arrangement, description, or preservation work to be conducted at independent levels of the others if necessary. To further ensure the appropriate rating and level of work is conducted the input of staff from several units should be sought. As well the metric calculations for processing work and the cost estimates for file inventory and item level work from this report can be used to indicate the efficiencies of various processing activities and help guide decision making as to the appropriate level of work that should be conducted based on institutional costs.

This effectiveness approach need not be inefficient. The University of California was able to achieve the average MPLP implementation rate of 2 hours per foot of records, double the original estimate of the MPLP article (Bachli, Eason, Light, McAnaney, Morrison and Seubert, 2012, 22). As suggested by the original MPLP article, the focus of archivists should be upon making the correct choices based on the needs and resources of the institution. Minimal processing will still be the basic standard unless additional work is justified. As such this philosophy of maximizing efficiency for the institution should guide the development of the rating system and decisions on the appropriate level of work to conduct. The goal should not be to define the ideal level of processing work, but the minimal level that will have the greatest benefit with the fewest costs for the institution. The University of California methods suggest that the present staff compliment of four should not only be able to keep pace with textual material added to the holdings annually but it would leave the equivalent of 1.5 full time staff members

to address other formats, the backlog, or other processing projects. As part of this study draft procedures for the rating system have been created and are available in Appendix 6.

This rating system need not be limited to processing. The criteria developed provide a means of assigning values to various attributes within a collection. This valuation system could be used to guide acquisition decision making and deaccession decisions. It can provide some means of identifying, tracking and prioritizing preservation work. Further, the processing metrics and cost/benefit calculation from this report provide a means of determining the costs of processing collections for the institution. If this rating system and a cost analysis is applied upon the acquisition of records it can also provide a means to assess and prioritize the backlog work conducted by the processing unit, further rationalizing decision making for the benefit of the organization. Ultimately this rating tool may prove useful in addressing one of the principle problems causing the backlog, the annual acquisition rates of the institution. Until these rates are addressed, no meaningful progress on the backlog can occur regardless of the improved efficiency rates in processing that may be achieved under this method.

### **7.2.2 RECOMMENDATION 2: STOP OR STREAMLINE MONETARY APPRAISAL**

#### **PROCESSING**

The Records Processing Unit presently conducts additional processing work for collections undergoing monetary appraisal. While there may be some means to streamline this work, these collections are prioritized over the processing of other records due to the time requirements of Revenue Canada.<sup>56</sup> To reduce the upfront costs of hiring monetary appraisers, additional descriptive work is done to provide further savings. In addition, to ensure the maximal valuation of records to the donor, the appraisers have recommended that all preservation rehousing and work be conducted down to the item level.<sup>57</sup> The Provincial Archives may want to consider eliminating this process entirely as it is neither efficient nor effective for the organization. However, it should be noted that this could lead to some problems acquiring material from donors who require a tax receipt, and could have political ramifications if donors complain about this service not being offered. This former option could in turn affect the mandate of the institution to acquire all of the history of the Province. Alternatively, the Provincial Archives should consider increasing the budget for monetary appraisal consultants to allow for minimally processed collections to be submitted for monetary appraisal acknowledging and accepting the greater cost for the appraisal. This report has demonstrated that while this could on average lead to increased direct costs for appraisal consultants, the institution would see increased indirect labour savings of approximately \$36,000 annually. Further, it would allow processing staff to use the most efficient and effective means of processing for the organization.

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<sup>56</sup> Revenue Canada requires that a tax receipt be issued within 5 years of the donation of material to the Provincial Archives

<sup>57</sup> Based on discussions with two monetary appraisers, they have noted that their valuation is affected by the expected lifespan of material and therefore the preservation work completed.

### **7.2.3 RECOMMENDATION 3: DEVELOP INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIES TO COPE WITH MPLP**

As noted above, the rating criteria processing method is still predicated upon minimal processing being the baseline for all work at the Provincial Archives. Many collections will still be processed minimally if after applying the criteria from Recommendation 1 additional work is not justified. Staff from other units will have to accept and adapt to minimally processed collections. It is recommended that Reference Services Staff in particular develop tools to cope with these collections, including tracking usage statistics, retrieval time, and making note of problematic collections. This information can be used to refine the rating system but also to identify where additional work might be recommended. Further, additional supplies such as file place markers and gloves should be purchased and provided to patrons to offset some of the problems Reference staff experience with MPLP processed collections. These will help keep collections in order and ensure that if unsleeved photographs are present that patrons use gloves when handling them. Ideally these strategies can be developed within the inter-unit committee designated to modify the MPLP program via the establishment of a collection rating system. Ultimately, all staff using minimally processed collections must accept the reality that additional time and effort will be required for retrieval and use, and that they must communicate the problems they experience to justify additional work retroactively.

### **7.2.4 RECOMMENDATION 4: ADDRESS DEFICIENCIES IN THE STORAGE ENVIRONMENTS**

Finally, the institution must prioritize a means of addressing the deficiencies in its storage environments. MPLP processing is based on the premise that the storage environment provides the most cost effective means for institutions to preserve collections. However, as has been discussed, the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan lacks a stable environment in several of its storage areas (Canadian Conservation Institute, 2013). The literature review has suggested that rehousing of records will not necessarily address shortcomings in the physical environment. Therefore, it is recommended to continue with MPLP's practice of limiting preservation rehousing work while processing. This will provide further cost savings to the institution in terms of archival supplies and labour. For photographs and negatives alone this report can estimate a cost savings of approximately \$700,000, based on the estimated costs to conduct processing work for these items in the backlog. The institution should prioritize renovations to its storage areas to address the physical environment problems. A Canadian Conservation Institute report suggested these renovation costs would amount to \$775,000 in up front and costs and \$72,100 in ongoing costs (Ibid, 20). This expense would require additional capital funding from the government of Saskatchewan and an increase in the annual operating budget. However, these costs may be necessary to properly fulfill the organization's mandate to preserve and provide ongoing access to the province's history.

### **7.2.5 RECOMMENDATION 5: CONDUCT FOLLOW-UP EVALUATION**

The recommendations in this report and the implementation of any modifications to MPLP will require monitoring and additional evaluation to ensure the program is meeting the needs of the institution. It is recommended that this evaluation be conducted by participants from the inter-unit committee mentioned earlier. This evaluation should also focus upon the further development, monitoring and

analysis of trends that are occurring in the statistics related to acquisition, processing, the backlog, and the costs of additional processing work. It is recommended that this follow-up evaluation occur one year after the implementation of the rating system and that it report on what changes were and were not implemented. This evaluation should be incorporated as part of the strategic plan goal for this program, ideally occurring in the 2017-18 year.

## **8.0 Conclusion**

This report has shown that the MPLP methods as implemented by the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan have not been effective or as efficient as they could be. MPLP methods do have shortcomings compared with traditional processing and such have significantly impacted the workload of other units. As well, these measures have only been partially implemented and so the Processing Unit has not always been able to utilize the most efficient methods available. The initial implementation of MPLP was driven almost entirely by the Records Processing Unit alone. While approval was granted by other units via an inter-departmental committee, more consultation and institutional buy in are required to make this program successful.

Minimal processing has been shown to have several major drawbacks for the institution. While this method does expose more of the backlog of unprocessed records to the public, this exposure can lead to additional issues providing access to the material. Reference Services must make several major program adjustments to facilitate this. Further, this method has implications upon the preservation of the archival collection, particularly as the Provincial Archives lacks full climate control in many of its storage areas. The present implementation of minimal processing does little to address these concerns, as plans for future processing work are not included with the present processes.

Present minimal processing methods have not been able to reduce the backlog of unprocessed records at the Provincial Archives and cannot keep pace with acquisitions. While this could be addressed by modifying and more fully implementing highly efficient methods of processing, this would not address the effectiveness problems identified in this report. Instead the Provincial Archives should pursue a more balanced and flexible approach to processing as implemented by the University of California Libraries.

The University of California approach relies upon the development of criteria for assessing and rating archival collections. These criteria should be established by consultations with several Provincial Archives departments to ensure the most appropriate method is utilized. Further, they should incorporate the processing metrics and costs outlined in this report to help guide decision making to reflect institutional costs and resources. This method will still rely upon minimal processing as a baseline for all work, but will allow the specific circumstances of collections alongside institutional resources to dictate when additional work shall be conducted. Further, this method has proven to be highly efficient, with the University of California being able to achieve the average MPLP implementation rate of 2 hours per foot of records (Bachli, Eason, Light, McAnaney, Morrison and Seubert, 2012, 22). The institution should further develop tools to track and report when this additional work is needed retroactively, and processing staff should accept the reality of needing to conduct more 'processing on demand.' However,

it should be noted that given the present pace of acquisitions it is highly doubtful that any efficiency improvement method will be able to address the backlog of records. Until changes are made to the rates of material being acquired and staffing levels within the Processing Unit no meaningful progress can be made to the backlog. Ultimately the Provincial Archives needs to find means to streamline, refine, and innovate several of its processes to truly meet the needs of the people of Saskatchewan we serve and the collections they have placed in our care.

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## 10.0 Appendices

### 10.1 Appendix 1: Procedures for the Physical Processing of Records at the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan 2008

**NOTE:** Under the proposed procedures, the guiding principle would be that *arrangement, physical processing and description take place at the same level*. Every container would be stamped and labelled with the accession number and unique identifier (fonds/series number and series/sub-series number where applicable *only*). All special media unless processed at the item level would remain physically with the fonds/series in either the textual records or in containers located at the end of the fonds/series.

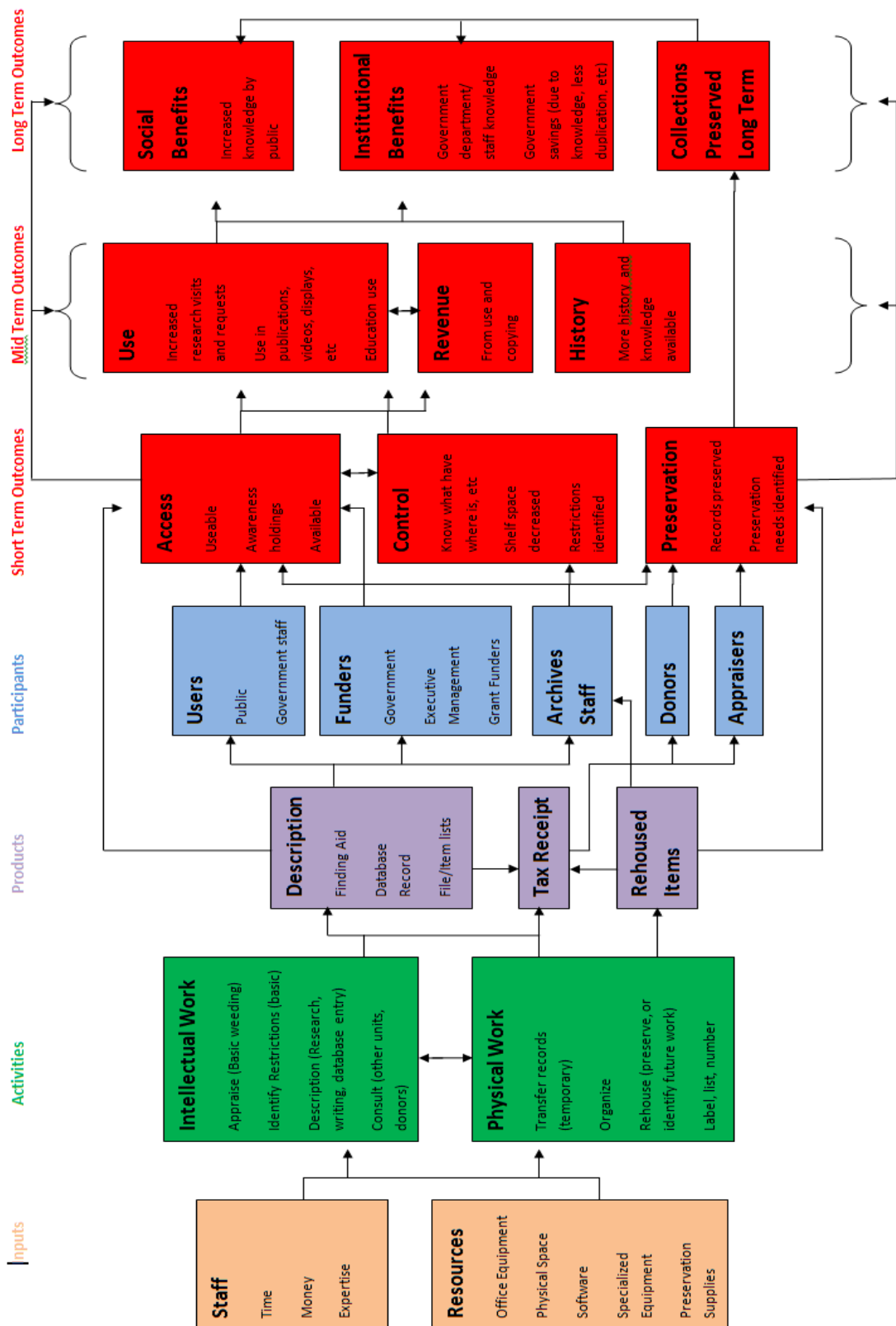
Current physical procedures for specific media would apply to records that warrant lower levels of description and/or preservation treatment. However, these procedures would take place *on an exceptional basis only*.

CURRENT PROCEDURES	PROPOSED PROCEDURES
<p><b>1. Textual Records</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrange records to the file level</li> <li>• Place loose materials in file folders</li> <li>• Remove all original file folders and place records in acid-free folders</li> <li>• Remove material from duo-tangs/binders, etc and place material in file folders. Transcribe information from the binder onto file folder</li> <li>• Remove all fasteners except staples</li> <li>• Photocopy/scan newspaper clippings and damaged/fragile records</li> <li>• Stamp and label all file folders</li> <li>• Stamp all restricted files and place red stickers on box fronts</li> <li>• Remove special media requiring description at the item level</li> <li>• Place graphic materials being retained in the textual records in appropriate sleeves</li> <li>• Place records in archival boxes</li> </ul>	<p><b>1. Textual Records</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrange records <i>to the fonds or series level only</i></li> <li>• Place loose materials in file folders</li> <li>• Keep original file folders unless damaged</li> <li>• Keep material in existing binders</li> <li>• Do not remove any fasteners</li> <li>• Do not photocopy newspaper clippings; copy only severely damaged or fragile records</li> <li>• Stamp and label all folders with accession number and fonds / series identifier <i>only</i></li> <li>• Stamp all restricted files and place red stickers on box fronts</li> <li>• Only remove special media requiring description at the item level (on an exceptional basis)</li> <li>• Place graphic materials retained in textual records in appropriate sleeves</li> <li>• Place records in archival boxes</li> </ul>

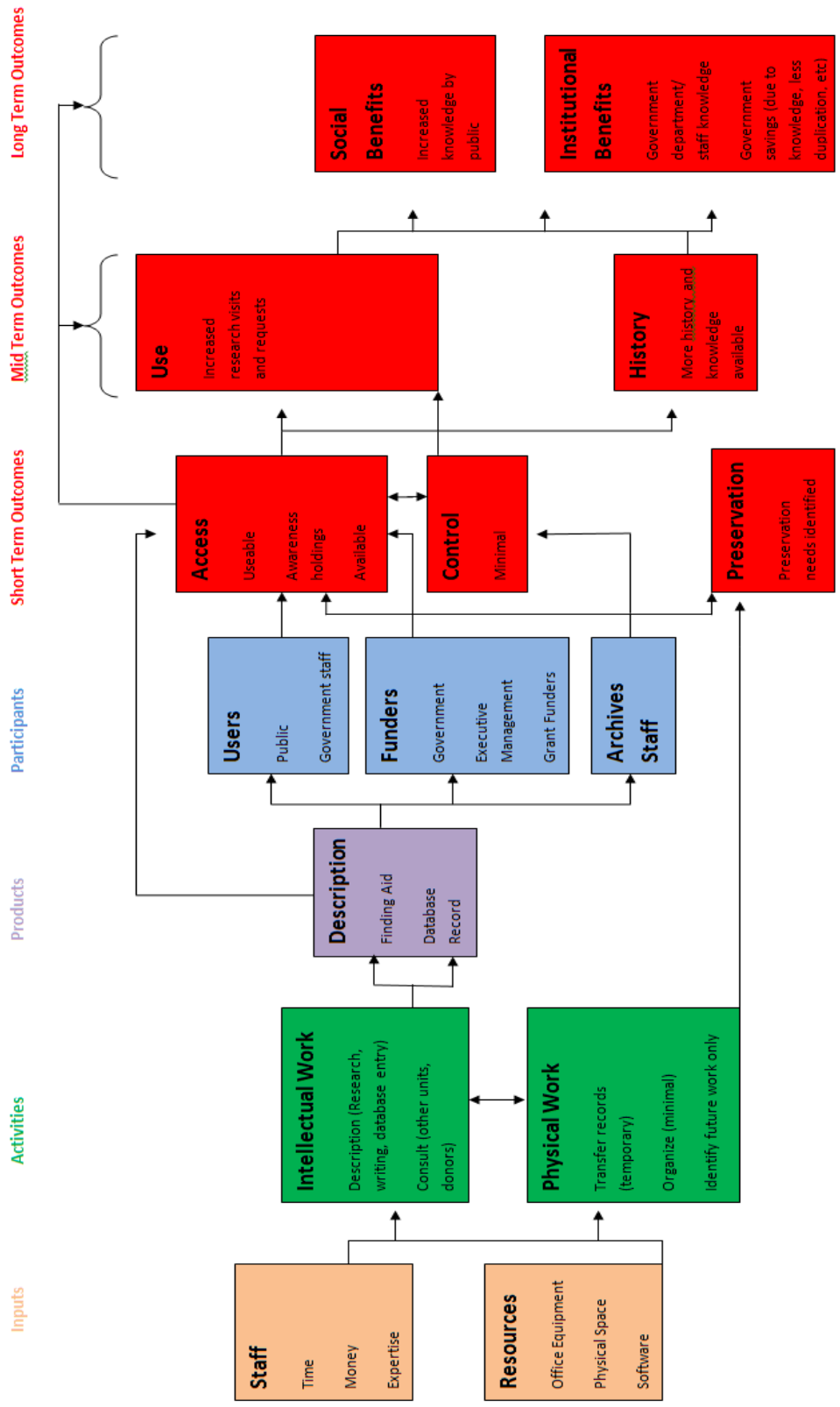
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Label box fronts</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Photographs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select and arrange items being described at the item level</li> <li>• Stamp and number each item</li> <li>• Place items in appropriate sleeves</li> <li>• Stamp and label envelopes</li> <li>• Stamp all restricted items</li> </ul> <p><b>3. Sound Recordings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select and arrange items</li> <li>• Inspect and clean/repair items if necessary</li> <li>• Listen to items</li> <li>• Label items</li> <li>• Make reference/preservation copies if necessary</li> <li>• Stamp restricted items</li> </ul> <p><b>4. Moving Images</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select and arrange items</li> <li>• Inspect items</li> <li>• View items</li> <li>• Clean and repair items if necessary</li> <li>• Label items</li> <li>• Make reference/preservation copies if necessary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Label box fronts</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Photographs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physically count items</li> <li>• Stamp and label container (file folder or box) with accession number and fonds / series identifier only</li> <li>• Stamp all restricted items</li> </ul> <p><b>3. Sound Recordings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physically count items</li> <li>• Listen to sample spots only of items to generally identify content at higher levels</li> <li>• Notify the Preservation Unit of any items visibly requiring repair / conservation treatment</li> <li>• Make a reference copy only if needed to access information on the record</li> <li>• Stamp and label container (plastic case or album cover) with accession number and fonds / series identifier only</li> <li>• Stamp restricted items</li> </ul> <p><b>4. Moving Images</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physically count items</li> <li>• View sample spots only of items to generally identify content at higher levels</li> <li>• Notify the Preservation Unit of any items visibly requiring repair / conservation treatment</li> <li>• Make a reference copy only if needed to access information on the record</li> <li>• Stamp and label container (plastic case or film can) with accession number and fonds</li> </ul>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stamp restricted items</li> </ul> <p><b>5. Maps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select and arrange items</li> <li>• Stamp and label items</li> <li>• Encapsulate items if necessary</li> <li>• Place items in labelled map folder</li> <li>• Stamp restricted items</li> </ul> <p><b>6. Architectural Drawings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select and arrange items</li> <li>• Stamp and number the items</li> <li>• Place items in rolled boxes or cabinets</li> <li>• Stamp restricted items</li> </ul>	<p>/ series identifier only</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stamp restricted items</li> </ul> <p><b>5. Maps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physically count items</li> <li>• Notify the Preservation Unit of any items visibly requiring repair / conservation treatment</li> <li>• Stamp and label container (map folder) with accession number and fonds / series identifier only</li> <li>• Stamp restricted items</li> </ul> <p><b>6. Architectural Drawings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physically count items by sets</li> <li>• Notify the Preservation Unit of any items visibly requiring repair / conservation treatment</li> <li>• Place items in rolled boxes or cabinets</li> <li>• Stamp and label container (box or folder) with accession number and fonds / series identifier only</li> <li>• Stamp restricted items</li> </ul>
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## 10.2 Appendix 2: Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan Logic Model: Ideal Processing



# 10.3 Appendix 3: Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan Logic Model: MPLP Minimal Processing



**10.4 Appendix 4: Canadian Council of Archives Time Guidelines for Arrangement and Description Projects Average Times** (Avery, O'Brien, and Hart, 2012)

<b>Format</b>	<b>Archival Activity</b>	<b>Average Work Estimates</b>
Textual Records	Appraisal	1.5 metres per day
Textual Records	Arrangement	1.5 metres per day
Textual Records	Description	1.5 metres per day
Textual Records	Physical Processing	1.5 metres per day
Photographic Records	Appraisal	200 images per day
Photographic Records	Arrangement	50 images per day
Photographic Records	Description	50 images per day
Photographic Records	Physical Processing	100 images per day
Audio-Visual Records	All archival work	4x running time
Architectural and Cartographic records	Appraisal	25 items per day
Architectural and Cartographic records	Arrangement	50 items per day
Architectural and Cartographic records	Description	20 items per day
Architectural and Cartographic records	Physical Processing	20 items per day

## 10.5 Appendix 5: University of California Libraries Processing Charts

**10.5.1 VALUE ASSESSMENT RATING CHART**, (Bachli, Eason, Light, McAnaney, Morrision, and Seubert, 2012, 19)

Scale	User Interest	Quality of Documentation	Institutional value	Object value
1	Negligible	Slight	Negligible	Negligible
2	Slight	Limited	Limited	Limited
3	Moderate	Pertinent, average	Moderate	Moderate
4	High	Important, extensive	High	High
5	Very high	Unique, very rich	Very high	Very high

**10.5.2 VALUE SCORE AND APPROPRIATE LEVEL OF EFFORT AND CONTROL CHART** (Bachli, Eason, Light, McAnaney, Morrision, and Seubert, 2012, 19-20)

Value Scores	Appropriate level of effort or control
4-5	Minimal effort   Collection level
6-10	Minimal effort   Collection level Low effort processing   Series or subseries level
11-15	Minimal effort   Collection level Low effort   Series or subseries level Moderate effort   File level (expedited)
16-18	Minimal effort   Collection level Low effort   Series or subseries level Moderate effort   File level (expedited) Intensive effort   File level (traditional)

19-20	Minimal effort   Collection level Low effort   Series or subseries level Moderate effort   File level (expedited) Intensive effort   File level (traditional) Highly intensive effort   Item level
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**10.5.3 LEVEL OF PROCESSING EFFORT AND CONTROL CHART** (Bachli, Eason, Light, McAnnaney, Morrision, and Seubert, 2012, 17-18)

Level of Effort	Level of Control	Attributes of likely candidates for this level of control / effort:
Minimal	Collection Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recent accessions.</li> <li>• Collections less than 2 linear feet.</li> <li>• Collections with low research value or little expected use.</li> <li>• Collections with simple organizational schemes.</li> <li>• Collections with uniform kinds of materials or subjects.</li> <li>• Collections in any format.</li> </ul>
Low	Series or Subseries Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collections greater than 2 linear feet.</li> <li>• Collections with low to medium research value and expected research use less than every few years.</li> <li>• Collections with potentially high research value or use that need expedited processing to get materials into the hands of users quickly. Patterns of use may be tracked for making further processing decisions.</li> <li>• Series of any size with adequate original order, description, and housing.</li> <li>• Series for which a succinct scope and content note in place of a folder list would offer adequate information for discovery.</li> <li>• Series of any size in which content or format is uniform and the existing arrangement is adequate for finding material, appropriate to the anticipated level of use.</li> <li>• Series with low research value, even if the content and/or formats are highly varied.</li> <li>• Collections lacking discernible order for which a rough sort of materials enables use.</li> </ul>
Moderate	File Level (expedited)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collections with moderate to high research value and expected research use at least once per year.</li> <li>• Series or collections with serviceable existing housing, organization, and/or description.</li> <li>• Series where the content and/or formats are highly varied.</li> </ul>

Intensive	Folder Level (traditional)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collections with high research value and expected research use on a regular basis.</li> <li>• Collections or series with little to no original order or housing.</li> <li>• Collections or series with a wide variety of topics or material types.</li> <li>• Collections or series with privacy issues, where restricted materials are scattered throughout.</li> </ul>
Highly Intensive	Item Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rarely appropriate and should be reserved for collections, or materials within collections, that are significantly rare and have the highest research value.</li> </ul>

## 10.6 Appendix 6: Draft Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan Collection Rating and Processing Work Charts

### Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan Collection Rating and Processing Work Charts

#### How to use the Collection Rating, Processing Work, and Processing Cost Charts:

Deciding on the appropriate level of processing work to carry out can have a great affect upon the entire institution. The Rating Chart is a useful tool to help guide decision making on the appropriate level of work to conduct. The rating in each category should be assigned based upon your evaluation of the applicable collection given the categories below, the higher the rating the more it is likely that additional processing work should be conducted. The rating system reflects that additional processing work should only be conducted based on multiple categories. For example there is little point in creating a file list for a very large collection if the user interest in the material is negligible. The chart is a useful tool to guide decision making but the rating chart does not completely replace all professional judgement.

It is usually beneficial to ere on the side of doing less processing work when making these decisions, as additional work can always be done later but doing too much work now has substantial costs for the Provincial Archives. It should also be noted that the appropriate rating for a collection may change over time, and that this may often justify additional work later. Further, the rating and processing work chart are not fool proof, and certain situations may require more work no matter the overall rating assigned. Please speak to your supervisor if you encounter circumstances where you feel additional work is justified that runs contrary to the rating. Remember that processing work should be flexible based on the needs of the collection, users, and the institution and that additional work that may be justified for part of a collection need not necessarily be carried out for all of the records.

#### Collection Rating Chart

Rating	User Interest	Research/Historical Value	Institutional Value	Object Value	Organization of Records	Volume	Preservation Needs	Restricted Material
1	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Excellent	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible Risk
2	Limited	Limited	Limited	Limited	Good	Small	Limited	Low Risk
3	Moderate	Average	Moderate	Moderate	Average	Medium	Medium	Medium Risk
4	High	Important, Extensive	High	High	Poor	Large	High	High Risk
5	Very High	Unique, Very Rich	Very High	Very High	Very Poor	Very Large	Very High	Very High Risk

**User Interest:**

This category reflects the expected demand for a collection, the higher the rating the higher the expected use of it. Often collections in high demand may require supplementary processing work to facilitate access and to lessen any negative impact upon the reference department. The expected demand could be a reflection on the variety of topics/subjects in the collection, the depth or uniqueness the collection provides in relation to those subjects, as well as the popularity of those topics with current research. The higher the value assigned the more likelihood that the collection will be used frequently or extensively by patrons. Additional processing work can often be justified by the expected volume of use for a collection. For example if a collection with a very high level of risk of containing restricted material but with little research demand may not necessarily require a file listing. Alternatively, a medium sized collection with very high expected demand might benefit from lower level descriptive work like an item listing. Demand can be hard to predict, the rating assigned to this category may need to be reassessed retroactively to justify additional processing work at a later time.

Questions to ask:

Given the topic(s) of the collection, how frequently is the material expected to be used for research? Is the material likely to be used by numerous researchers or only a few? Is it likely the collection will be used by many different types of users (Genealogists, Academics, etc?)

**Research/Historical Value:**

This category is a reflection of the importance of the collection to the history of the Province, the higher the rating the more research/historical value the collection will contain. When assessing this category it is important to consider its value in relation to other records and the collection as a whole. If little other information exists on the topic it may have more value for research. Alternatively, if the subject matter of the records is already well documented it may have less value. Typically the higher the research/historical value assigned the more likely that additional processing work may be justified. For example a poorly organized collection with low research value may not benefit greatly from lower level processing work. This category may need to be reassessed retroactively for additional work in the future depending on the use of the collection.

Questions to ask:

How significant is the collection to a particular subject? How unusual, extensive or detailed is the collection compared with other collections with similar subject matter? Does the collection include a wide variety of subject matter or only a few? Is the collection expected to facilitate the research of a wide variety of researchers or only a few? Would a researcher be expected to have multiple research visits and requests when using the collection?

**Institutional Value:**

This category reflects the importance of the collection to the institution, the higher the value the more important the collection is to the institution and the more appropriate it will be to conduct additional work to reflect this. This may reflect possible use of the collection by the institution for specific promotional purposes such as an online display. As well, it factors in the potential political ramifications of the collection, or how the Saskatchewan Government or general public might value the collection. Higher values in this category tend to correspond to the need to conduct more processing work. When assigning a value consider the final question below in particular when assigning a rating particularly to ensure an appropriate level of work is conducted.

Questions to Ask:

Is the collection of interest to the Provincial Archives? Could the collection be used for promotional purposes or to raise the profile of the institution? Are there political considerations with the collection? Would additional work on the collection reflect better upon the institution or affect the institution's use of the collection?

**Object Value:**

This category reflects the value of the collection and the particular records it contains. The more financially valuable, rare or significant the records the higher the rating assigned. This category can justify additional work on a record; however, it is important to remain flexible. If only a small amount of records within the collection have a high object value then consider only conducting lower level work for those particular records and not the entire collection. If this is the case please document this in the notes and assign the rating based on the collection as a whole and not specific items or parts of the collection.

**Questions to Ask:**

Does the collection include significant, rare, precious, or financially valuable material? How likely would the material be targeted for theft? Would specific records be useful for display based on their current format? Will individual records within the collection benefit from lower level work or does the entire collection require it?

**Organization of Records:**

This category reflects the state of the records. In particular whether the present organization of the records would inhibit the ability to understand the collection, to use the collection, or is unlikely to be the original order of the records. The less organized a collection is the more likely there is for the need to restore order or provide tools to assist with use. Rate collections in very poor order higher values than those in very good order or that already contain supplementary tools like file lists. The more well organized the collection the lower the rating that should be assigned, this may seem counterintuitive but higher ratings reflect the need for additional work.

**Questions to Ask:**

How good is the present state of arrangement for the records, are they in original order? How usable and understandable would the collection be given its state of organization?

**Volume:**

This category reflects the scope of the collection. When assigning a rating in this category focus upon how the volume of the collection would affect the ability to retrieve and access the files. Higher ratings reflect larger volumes of collection in terms of metres of textual records or number of items. Typically larger volume collections can benefit from additional processing to facilitate searching and retrieval. Typically volumes ratings range from negligible (less than 1 metre or less than 50 items) to medium (2-5 metres, 100-200 items) to very large (10+ metres and 500+ items).

**Questions to Ask:**

How large is the collection? Would the volume affect how easily the records could be retrieved and used? Do the records benefit from supplementary tools (box lists, file lists, item lists) to make them searchable and usable?

**Preservation Needs:**

This category reflects the need to conduct work to preserve materials. While most standard archival practices have been shown to extend the lifespan of records, we must balance the costs of this additional work for the overall benefit to the collection and the institution. Generally, the preservation environment is the most crucial component for preservation and will be the primary means that the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan addresses the preservation needs of the majority of material within its holdings. When determining a rating within [this category](#), focus upon preservation activities that are required to address a

problem not readily solved by the physical environment. These can include formats that could be easily damaged by handling or without proper storage containers (such as glass plate negatives); damaged or highly inappropriate records containers (or lack of containers); formats that have a high risk of short term deterioration such as magnetic media or nitrate negatives; or material that is already experiencing damage from water or mold. The higher the rating assigned the more work that will be required to ensure the lifespan of the collection. Please keep in mind that a rating in this category should be reflective of the needs of the preservation needs and the quantity of material requiring this additional work.

Questions to Ask:

Do the records contain high risk formats? Do the records contain fragile items that may be easily damaged? Have the records been damaged in some way that requires additional work?

#### Restricted Material:

This category reflects the degree of risk the institution would be exposed to due to the likelihood of the collection containing restricted material. However, the rating should not be reflective of the likelihood of restricted records being within the collection alone. It should also include an assessment of whether processing work is required to address the risks this material presents and whether or not restricted material might be viewed inadvertently if the collection was accessed. For example if restricted material is widespread in a collection, the best approach is to restrict the collection as a whole to eliminate all risk to the institution, and as such it would not necessarily benefit from additional processing work. However, if restricted material is not easily segregated by closing an entire series/sub-series of records it might be deemed to be a higher risk to the institution. As this is a complex assessment please follow the following steps to assign a rating in this category and to record relevant notes for the collection:

- 1) Assess the likelihood that restricted material exists and assign a preliminary rating (5 definitely, 4 likely, 3 possibly, 2 unlikely, 1 very unlikely).
- 2 a) If you assessed the likelihood as being a 1 or 2, this should be your final ranking skip the remaining steps
- 2 b) If you assessed it at preliminary rank of 3 or higher next assess whether this material represents the majority of the collection
  - if restricted material is widespread (not easily segregated) and represents the majority of the record (ie at least ¾ of the record requires restrictions) restrict the entire collection and finalize your rating as a 1, and note the collection needs to be restricted as a whole
  - if restricted material is widespread (not easily segregated) but represents a minority of the record (ie at least half of the record should still be accessible) your rating should be a 5
  - if restricted material is limited to one or more sections but within those sections this could not be easily segregated from unrestricted records, your rating should be a 4 (make note of the sections that contain the restrictions)
  - if restricted material is limited to one or more sections of the collection that could be easily segregated, finalize your rating as a 3 (make note of the sections to segregate)
- 3 a) If the preliminary rating is a 4, would a file list be able to identify most of the restricted material in the sections that are not easily segregated?
  - if yes finalize the rating as a 5 and make note that a file list may be required and which parts of the collection would benefit from it
  - if no, finalize the rating as a 4 and make note of the sections of the collection that must be restricted
- 3 b) If the rating is a 5, would a file list be able to identify most of the restricted material?
  - if yes finalize the rating as a 5 and note that a file list will be required to identify restricted records and facilitate access
  - if no, finalize your rating as a 1 and note the entire collection must be restricted

Please note if you are uncertain about the type of records that might be restricted please contact LCAU.

Please note that collections that are restricted in their entirety should still be assigned a ranking and may still require additional processing work. The records may still be accessed under certain legislative requirements and as such may require tools to facilitate that access, or the preservation needs or value of the material may further justify this additional work.

Questions to Ask:

How likely is the collection to contain restricted or confidential material? How widespread is restricted material likely to be in the collection? Can restricted material be easily segregated from other records? Should the entire collection be restricted? Is there a high likelihood of restricted or confidential material being accidentally exposed if the collection is available for research?

### Processing Effort and Control Chart

Value Scores	Level of effort or control to process up to	Typical Attributes of Appropriate Collections
8-10	Minimal effort   Collection Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recent accessions to already processed collection</li> <li>Small volume collections (under 5 metres) and/or simple organizational schemes and adequate housing</li> <li>Collections with uniform formats or subject matter</li> <li>Low research value, little expected use, and or low to moderate institutional value</li> </ul>
11-20	Low effort processing   Series or Subseries Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moderate to large volume collections (over 5 metres) and/or with adequate order</li> <li>Collections with low to medium research value or expected use. Or collections with high expected research value/interest that need expedited work (request for processing)</li> <li>Clear distinct series/sub-series with adequate original order, and housing where series description would provide an adequate substitute for discovery in most cases and use in place of a file list</li> <li>Series with low research value or expected use even if formats/subject matter highly varies and/or volume is high</li> <li>Collections under poor order where rough sorting would enable use</li> <li>Collections with very low to medium risk of restricted materials (restricted materials can easily be segregated into series that can be restricted)</li> </ul>
21-30	Moderate effort   File level (basic)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collections with moderate to very high research value and expected use, and moderate or higher volume</li> <li>Series or collections with adequate housing, and poor to adequate organization</li> <li>Series where the subject matter and formats are highly varied</li> <li>Series where the volume of material would inhibit access</li> <li>Collections or series where the risk of restricted materials is high (the material is scattered</li> </ul>

31-36	Intensive effort   File level (traditional) and/or item list (basic)	<p>throughout)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collections with high research value and expected use and moderate or higher volume</li> <li>• Collections or series with little to no original order or organization that would greatly inhibit access</li> <li>• Collections with moderate to high preservation needs or need for rehousing</li> <li>• Collections or series with a wide variety of subject matter and formats or collections where item level listing is required to provide access</li> <li>• Collections or series where the risk of restricted materials is high or very high (the material is scattered throughout)</li> </ul> <p>REQUIRES RECORDS PROCESSING MANAGER APPROVAL</p>
37-40	Highly intensive effort   File level (traditional) and item level (traditional)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rarely appropriate for entire collections, often this work may be justified for single series, items, or other groupings within a collection only</li> <li>• Collections, series, or items that have high or very high object value due to their rarity, monetary value, or risk of damage/theft</li> <li>• Items with a high preservation need value where immediate rehousing and work is required to ensure their short and long term lifespan</li> <li>• Collections with extremely poor organization, high volume, very high user interest and research value, and a wide variety of subject matter or formats where file level work is required and item level work is required</li> </ul> <p>REQUIRES RECORDS PROCESSING MANAGER APPROVAL</p>

**Estimating Work and Revising the Ranking**

One of the last steps involved when ranking and determining the level of processing work should be to estimate the costs to the institution and possibly revise the ranking. Costs in time should not always be used to lower a ranking but may help guide decisions on the level of work to complete in some circumstances. Use the formula's below to calculate the estimated cost in hours. Locate the applicable chart(s) for the level(s) of work you plan on conducting. Add the total number of hours or days for each applicable chart together. Does the total amount of time to complete the work seem acceptable? Does the total amount of time to conduct work below the collection/series level seem reasonable given the collection? Will the total amount of time impact the unit and its work plans for this year? If at any time you answer no consider revising your rating to the next lower category. Would the level of work for this category be acceptable given the collection?

**Collection or Series/Sub-Series Level work proposed**

Total volume of collection in Metres	
Multiple by	8.54 <sup>1</sup>
Total Estimated Hours	
Divide by 8 for Days	

**File list (Basic) Proposed**

Total volume of collection in Metres	
Multiple by	4.6 <sup>2</sup>
Total Estimated Hours	
Divide by 8 for Days	

**File level (Traditional) Proposed**

Total volume of collection in Metres	
Multiple by	21.36 <sup>3</sup>
Total Estimated Hours	
Divide by 8 for Days	

**Item List (Basic) Proposed**

Total Number of Maps, Plans, or Drawings	
Multiple by	0.092 <sup>4</sup>
Total Estimated Hours	
Divide by 8 for Days	

Total Number of Graphic Items	
Multiple by	0.023 <sup>5</sup>
Total Estimated Hours	
Divide by 8 for Days	

Total Estimated Items of Audio Video	
Multiple by	0.092 <sup>6</sup>
Total Estimated Hours	
Divide by 8 for Days	

Total Estimated Days/Hours	
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**Item level (Traditional) Proposed**

Total Number of Maps, Plans, or Drawings	
Multiple by	1.28 <sup>7</sup>
Total Estimated Hours	
Divide by 8 for Days	

Total Number of Graphic Items	
Multiple by	0.44 <sup>8</sup>
Total Estimated Hours	
Divide by 8 for Days	

Total Estimated Hours of Audio Video (Assume 1 hour per item)	
Multiple by	0.25 <sup>9</sup>
Total Estimated Hours	
Divide by 8 for Days	

Total Estimated Days/Hours	
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<sup>1</sup> Based on CCA estimate of 21.36 hours per metre of record decreased by 62% due to MPLP 4 hours/foot metric

<sup>2</sup> Based on Globe Theatre records study with 4.6 hours per metre average

<sup>3</sup> Based on CCA average metrics of hours per metre of records

<sup>4</sup> Based on Globe Theatre study of 0.023 images per hour, quadrupled to account for different format

<sup>5</sup> Based on Globe Theatre study with 0.023 images per hour rate achieved

<sup>6</sup> Based on Globe Theatre study of 0.023 images per hour, quadruples to account for different format

<sup>7</sup> Based on average CCA metrics per item

<sup>8</sup> Based on average CCA metrics per item

<sup>9</sup> Based on average CCA metrics per item/hour