

**The National Archival Development
Program (NADP)**

Project Time Guidelines

Saskatchewan Council for Archives and Archivists

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1. Introduction:

Trying to figure out how long a project – or a part of a project – will take to complete can be difficult. The following guidelines have been developed in order to help provide some direction to in this regard. These timelines will almost certainly be modified as they are used, and the assumptions made in them are tested against actual conditions. Current versions will be made available on the SCAA website (<http://scaa.sk.ca>).

We have identified different project types, broken them down into their constituent elements and provided a range of estimates of how long each task could be expected to take. The problem is that archival records do not lend themselves easily to categorisation, and developing a standardised formula for estimating time lines can be somewhat problematic. Careful pre-application planning will help smooth some of these issues, of course, but ultimately archival collections – like fingerprints – are always unique.

The recommendations in this document should be considered as starting points only, with the particular context of each institution or collection weighting the numbers in one direction or another. The ranges built into our time estimates are based on the complexity of the records or degree of difficulty involved in working with them. Records that arrive neatly boxed and foldered, with file lists and disposition schedules, for example, are going to be relatively simple to work with and thus would warrant a lower estimate. Records that arrive in the archives as large piles of loose material dumped unceremoniously on the table will require substantially more time to deal with.

You *must* honestly justify your time estimates, particularly if they are especially high. Special circumstances must be noted and a convincing rationale provided. It is not enough to say “the guidelines allow me to claim such-and-such an amount of time, thus I will.” The difference in time required to create full, item-level descriptions for every photograph versus the time it takes to lump them together by subject will be considerable. Your application must make that distinction. Failure to provide adequate justification for extremely high time estimates will negatively effect your final ranking and ultimately the success or failure of your application.

These guidelines are a good first step in developing a project, but should be used in combination with a thorough understanding of what the project is all about, the material that it deals with, and how it will proceed. In some cases, small “pilot” projects (the existence and results thereof being noted in the subsequent application) may be undertaken to accurately work out the time required for certain tasks

2. Arrangement and Description Projects

a) Textual Records:

Task	Modifier			X
	1	2	3	
Background Research	3 days	2 days	1 day	
Initial appraisal / selection	1 m / day	2 m / day	3 m / day	
Archival Processing	½ box / day	1 box / day	1 ½ boxes / day	
Physical Processing	1 box / day	2 boxes / day	3 boxes / day	
Finding Aid Review	2 days	1 day	½ day	
Project Management	Project manager staff time contribution not to exceed 15 % of total project value less the value of the time worked by the project manager.			

b) Photographs:

Task	Modifier			X
	1	2	3	
Background Research	3 days	1 day	½ day	
Initial appraisal / selection	100 images / day	200 images/ day	300 images / day	
Archival Processing	50 images / day	100 images / day	150 images / day	
Physical Processing	100 images / day	150 images / day	200 images / day	
Finding Aid Review	3 days	2 days	1 day	
Project Management	Project manager staff time contribution not to exceed 15 % of total project value less the value of the time worked by the project manager.			

c) Architectural and Cartographic material:

Task	Modifier			X
	1	2	3	
Background Research	3 days	1 day	½ day	
Initial appraisal / selection	100 items / day	150 items/ day	200 items / day	
Archival Processing	50 items / day	100 items / day	150 items / day	
Physical Processing	100 items / day	150 items / day	200 items / day	
Finding Aid Review	3 days	2 days	1 day	
Project Management	Project manager staff time contribution not to exceed 15 % of total project value less the value of the time worked by the project manager.			

d) Audio and moving image material:

Background research: ½ , 1, or 3 days.

Initial appraisal/selection: If labels or lists with sufficient detail exist, then a preliminary appraisal may be possible, at the rate suggested for cartographic and architectural material.

Archival and Physical Processing (total): Generally this will be 2.5x the running time of the material (so that it may be listened to or viewed, stopped while information is recorded, re-started, rewound, played again, etc). For fairly simple collections, or those where the material is accompanied by reliable labels, lists or other associated documents which provide a level of detail sufficient to allow them to be processed without actually listening or watching the entire thing, use the rates suggested for architectural and cartographic material.

(Note that doing it this way forces you to depend completely on the completeness and accuracy of the associated documentation and does not allow you to assess any preservation issues which may only be apparent when actually viewing or listening to the material. Thus some kind of sampling process is recommended.)

Finding Aid review: 1- 3 days to ensure consistency and for proof reading. Extra time may be claimed to allow for sampling of index entries to test for accuracy and consistency.

Project Management: as above.

Scanning projects:

These guidelines assume that all scans can be done in one pass and that no additional digital manipulation of the images is required.

For projects not requiring selection (for example, complete photograph fonds), scanning & re-folding: 50-70 images/day (10 minutes per image, for scan & thumbnail)

For projects requiring selection: 25-35 images/day (15 minutes per image)

For projects requiring scanning & description: follow description guidelines for photographs and use appropriate scanning guidelines.

(The time requirements for projects with more complicated scanning or digital manipulation components vary too widely to allow standardised guidelines. Those undertaking projects in which oversized material will be scanned separately then stitched together, or photographed in a copying station, or projects such as virtual displays which may require additional post-processing of images, should do a small sample first in order to create reliable time estimates. Alternatively, this kind of project can be farmed out to a third party, who will provide an estimate of time and costs that can be used as the basis of a project application.)

4. Redescription projects:

Fonds-level only:

The number expected will vary according to the amount of work required. For example:

If requiring biographical note / administrative history: 3/day

If requiring only extent: 10/day

Series-level only:

The number expected will vary according to the amount of work required. For example:

If re-describing following the Australian series system: 3/day

If enhancing existing descriptions: 10/day

5. Indexing projects:

For projects requiring substantially new subject authorities, preparation of these authorities and their ongoing development throughout the project is expected to take 20% of the total project time. The actual indexing should probably be calculated at 40-50 subjects/day

For projects transcribing personal names or geographical place names, developing policies regarding name authorities should not take more than 5% of the total project time. The actual indexing should probably be calculated at 75-100 names/day

6. Thematic guides:

For projects locating and reviewing materials from within a larger collection or from a variety of sources (including multi-institutional projects) describing these holdings at the file-or item-level, we advise creating or using a subject authority (20% of total project time).

Location, review and description should probably be calculated at 10-20 files per day, or 30-40 items (if photographs, maps, etc.)

Finding aid review can be calculated at the rate used for photographs. Multi-institutional projects will probably take longer to do than those using records from a single archives.

7. Explanations and examples:

Upon initially examining the records, available information, etc, assign a complexity modifier for each task, marking it in the check box at the end of each row. Within any single backlog project, each task may have a different modifier, depending upon the nature of the material.

A “1” indicates that the work required is complex or demanding, “2” that it is relatively straightforward, and “3” that it is very straightforward. Note that some parameters are assumed, e.g., that the project will not be to arrange and describe the records of an entire municipality, for example, which would presumably take more than 3 days to do the necessary background research.

“Box” refers to a standard 30 cm file box.

Not all projects will require all tasks to be completed, e.g., in some instances, background research and/or finding aid review may not be necessary. Do not add time for work that is not necessary.

Background research:

Research into the historical context of the records, both as part of the creation of an administrative history / biography of the records creator and to give the archivist a familiarity with the context of creation of the records prior to diving into them.

Examples of the way modifiers could be assigned in the scoring grid might include:

(1) A large or complicated collection (e.g., a multi-generational family fonds) or one with no obvious secondary information sources to draw on; (2) Simple administrative structure, existing library and/or newspaper sources for administrative/biographical backgrounds; (3) Existing, readily available administrative histories or biographies, small or simple records creator, addition to existing fonds or collection, no administrative or biographical history required for finding aid.

Initial Appraisal/Selection:

A “quick and dirty” appraisal, essentially going through the boxes or lists in search of material that can be readily identified as non-archival (eg., a box containing multiple copies of the same publication, say, or cash register tapes, or reference copies of minutes for which you know the originals exist elsewhere). Appraisal based on a formal disposition schedule also occurs at this stage (although if this is the case the rate should be based on the speed at which the archivist can pile the affected boxes in the loading bay for pick up).

Examples of the way modifiers could be assigned in the scoring grid might include:

(1) Complex, poorly organized group of records, no accession information to draw on; (2) fairly homogeneous, reasonably well organized, possibly with file or box lists; (3) very well organized, boxes all in order with accompanying file lists.

Archival Processing:

This refers to detailed or selective appraisal, arrangement and descriptions – tasks which while conceptually separate are most likely to be done together as the archivist works through the records. It is theoretically possible to create a project where one person does arrangement, for example, while another busies herself only with description. But in practice these tend to happen simultaneously.

The modifier chosen will depend on things like the complexity and organization of the collection, degree of homogeneity of the records, (e.g., are there various record and format types, or are they all pretty much the same thing?) size and number of files, number of individual items, degree of disorder, etc. Minutes and ledgers, especially, will tend to require less work and thus require less time to complete, but things like case files should also go at a faster rate.

Physical Processing:

This refers to preservation work and will most often include things like re-foldering and re-boxing into archivally-sound enclosures, unfolding of folded items, removing non-standard items such as photographs or maps and housing them separately, pulling pins and staples where appropriate, etc. It may also included more specialized preservation activities such as encapsulating, creating custom boxes or other enclosures, or re-copying/re-formatting.

Factors that will help determine the degree of complexity at this stage include: homogeneity of the records (are there lots of photographs and over sized items in the files which will need to be removed and removal sheets put in their place?), general physical condition of the records, any specialized preservation work that needs to be done, (e.g., encapsulation of fragile documents). Things such as average folder size will effect this (the more files there are the more re-foldering that needs to be done).

All work that is claimed to have been done must, of course, actually be done.

Finding Aid Review and Revision:

Much of what constitutes finding aid creation occurs when the records are being processed, as archivists capture information and record it in some systematic way. This final step of the process involves going through the finding aid to ensure uniformity of presentation and consistency of data capture, as well as general review and proof-reading, and a final overview of the whole product.

The amount of time required for this will depend on the length of the final product or the number of individual entries that need to be examined.