

## Presentation Notes to Process This!

**Title Page-** none

**The Libraries-** Background of VCU Libraries & it's Special Collections and Archives departments

**The Why-** VCU Libraries has been doing a series of Inreach events where each department has an open house. These have been every 3-6 months. SCA had theirs in Fall 2016. There are 2 SCA departments at VCU- 1 at JBC and 1 at the Medical campus; we had a joint event as we work closely together.

Consisted of tours of our new space, a show and tell of some of our more interesting (and a few basic) items. We also had games.

We had used games before at staff events and local events, particularly successful in the medical library. Cut by numbers- Help us Amputate a Leg!, Was it a Hospital, Identify Me! This time we decided to do something that was a little more serious and focused on what we actually do every day. Particularly because often archivists know what librarians do to some extent, but librarians rarely have a decent grasp on what archivists do, in my experience. If we had them process, it would provide insight into how our jobs differ and we're not reading old books all day.

**The How-** Colleague Jodi Koste taught a course and used an imaginary company's records to help students learn to process, so we used those materials. We made multiple copies so multiple people could be working at once.

We did a very basic explanation on how processing worked- sometimes there's an original order, sometimes there's not. In this case, they were just dumped in a box so very little order. Asked some questions to think about- do you want to divide by the type of record? How do you determine what type of record it is? Do you arrange by date or by something else? What would be the most important thing to you as a researcher? Do you need to keep everything? How would you make sure a researcher could tell what was in the collection without it being overwhelming?

**The Game in Action-** colleagues playing the game.

**The Good-** People quickly began collaborating. A few worked alone, but most banded together with other librarians, discussing pros and cons of arrangements. Lots of people got really into it, like they were really processing the collection.

We got a lot of comments about how "wow, a lot goes into this!" "this is harder than I thought it would be!" It's difficult to explain exactly what's hard about doing archives, why it takes actual skill and training. This game did it quickly and clearly in the first few minutes.

This seems like a bad thing, but people were frustrated that there was no one right answer. Even "most correct" was subjective because what I would say is more correct is different than what someone else might say is more correct.

**The Fixable-** So one of the Good things are also one of the bad. Most people were frustrated in a good way, but a few were genuinely annoyed that there was no most correct answer.

The collection was HUGE because was meant to be done across a few days, rather than in a short 5 -10 minutes. Lots of duplicates meant people spent a lot of time tossing stuff, or figuring out if it was a copy, or deciding whether or not they need to keep duplicates.

Next time, we need to find a way to make the game more whimsical and silly- more game-like rather than a task.

How can someone win? What could we give out as prizes- hey y'all, you get a well-organized finding aid! The winners are your patrons!- just isn't going to cut it.

**What Can We Do?**- Though overall colleagues seemed to really enjoy the game, there are still improvements to be made, especially if we want to take it on the road to non-librarian folks. Add more whimsy- create a new fake collection but something fun. Keep a few/most letters short and fun to read.

Keep the collections smaller. Only have a few duplicates, if any. Make it something where most items are easy to identify/categorize (throw in a few "what is this?!" items.)

Have better defined rules. Maybe something where there are pre-defined categories/series.

Have a quick dictionary to define what it is we're talking about when we say series, original order, etc.

But in a way to be cheeky.

The game in this iteration was clearly aimed at library professionals. We need to create an edition aimed at K-12 or at the very least non LIS folks.