

I.3. Rates

Processing rates vary a great deal from collection to collection. The following guidelines have been found to be both useful and reliable. It must be noted, however, that processing estimates are derived from preliminary examinations of collections of papers. It is always possible, therefore, that complications will be found during processing that were not anticipated at the time of the survey.

In determining processing rates, all time is considered equal. (Not all processing requires the expertise of trained archivists, so efficiencies can be achieved by matching tasks to levels of skill and expertise of available staff.) Some tasks should only be undertaken by trained archivists, while other tasks like stamping, sorting, preservation photocopying, inputting, numbering, and some listing can be done by clerical assistants, students, interns, or volunteers. The greater the expertise of support staff, the wider the range of duties that can be assigned to them.

These rates include all processing time, from preliminary survey through and including inputting and correcting registers. In addition, all collections are considered equal, although small collections smaller than 3 linear feet will usually take longer to complete than the projected time and larger collections of 20 or more feet will usually take less time because of economies of scale.

Processing Rate A (40 hours per linear ft.)

Used for collections that have to be described at the item or virtually at the item level, like autograph collections.

Processing Rate B (30 hours per linear ft.)

Used for collections that have little or no arrangement and order. Different kinds of materials are mixed together, correspondence is unsorted or stored in original envelopes, some papers and correspondents are unidentified, and extensive preservation work may be required.

Processing Rate C (20 hours per linear ft.)

Used for collections that have an average number of problems. Papers may have some order and sections of the collection may be properly sorted, although significant portions will have to be arranged and a good deal of interfiling work will have to be done. Most collections can be processed at this rate.

Processing Rate D (10 hours per linear ft.)

Used for collections that have no significant organizational problems. A minimum amount of interfiling and reorganization is needed. The major portion of staff time will be expended on the basic work required for all collections: reboxing, refolding, listing, and describing the contents of the papers. Records of organizations and collections that consist primarily of manuscripts of published works often fall into the D category.

I.4. Factors to Consider

1. Language and/or difficulty in deciphering handwriting
2. An excessive amount of preservation work

A preliminary analysis of a collection may indicate that the degree of processing difficulty may fall between two categories. Thus:

Processing rate A/B (35 hours per linear ft.)

Processing rate B/C (25 hours per linear ft.)

Processing rate C/D (15 hours per linear ft.)

Total processing time is determined by multiplying the estimated linear footage by the processing rate.

4.5 linear ft. x 20 hours per ft. = 90 hours

I.5. Table of Estimated Processing Times

The following memo is included for comparative purposes.

This is in response to the requests for processing times that were determined at the Library of Virginia, Archives and Records Division, for a September 1990 inventory project.

Type and Date Range of Record Per Cubic Foot

Full processing (includes flat-filing, arrangement, description, foldering, and boxing)

Pre-1800 Personal Papers	9 days
Pre-1900 Personal Papers	5.5 days
Post-1900 Personal Papers	3.5 days
Pre-1800 State Government	4.25 days
Pre-1900 State Government	2.75 days
Post-1900 State Government	1.1 days
Pre-1800 Business	4.25 days
Pre-1900 Business	2.75 days
Post-1900 Business	1.25 days
Pre-1800 Local Government	7 days
Pre-1900 Local Government	4.5 days
Post-1900 Local Government	2.25 days
Pre-1800 Mixed types	8.5 days
Pre-1900 Mixed types	5.5 days
Post-1900 Mixed types	3.25 days

Reboxing only (includes labeling) 6 minutes

Refoldering only

Per folder	2 minutes
Per box	.5 to 6 hours*

*In collection where materials need refoldering, do sample on two boxes for average number of folders and use two minutes per folder.

These figures were based on trial runs and using the Lynches article in *The Midwestern Archivist*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1982.

L. H. Hart III, The Library of Virginia.