DHPS|NY

DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE & PRESERVATION SERVICES

FOR NEW YORK

Thanks for joining us! Today's presentation will begin shortly.

Please check your audio and video settings.
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If you have questions or want to report any technical issues,
contact us at info@dhpsny.org or (267) 362-9433.

THE PROCESS OF PROCESSING:

Creating and Implementing Processing Plans

Kate Philipson, DHPSNY Archives Specialist

Documentary Heritage and Preservation Services for New York is a five year initiative to deliver collections-related training, preservation surveys, archival assessments, and other services to the historical records community in New York.

Website: dhpsny.org

Kate Philipson

DHPSNY Archives Specialist

Site visits, needs assessments and preservation surveys

Workshops, webinars

A/V Media Preservation background

Excited about processing!

(Jan is also excited about archival processing)

Let's talk about:

- What a processing plan is, in the context of archival processing

- Why you'd want to create and use a processing plan

- How you will approach and write one

Illustrations by Klaus Kremmerz. *Village Voice*, "Keepers of the Secrets" by James Somers, 9/20/2017

What are Archives?

- Unique records

- Permanently valuable records of people, businesses, and government

- Arranged and described in aggregate

- "Collections that preserve contextual relationships between records"
  - This is what defines their significance and importance!

Archival Processing

- SAA Definition:
  - The arrangement, description, and housing of archival materials for storage and use by patrons.

- Goals:
  - preserve materials for future use
  - make materials accessible to researchers
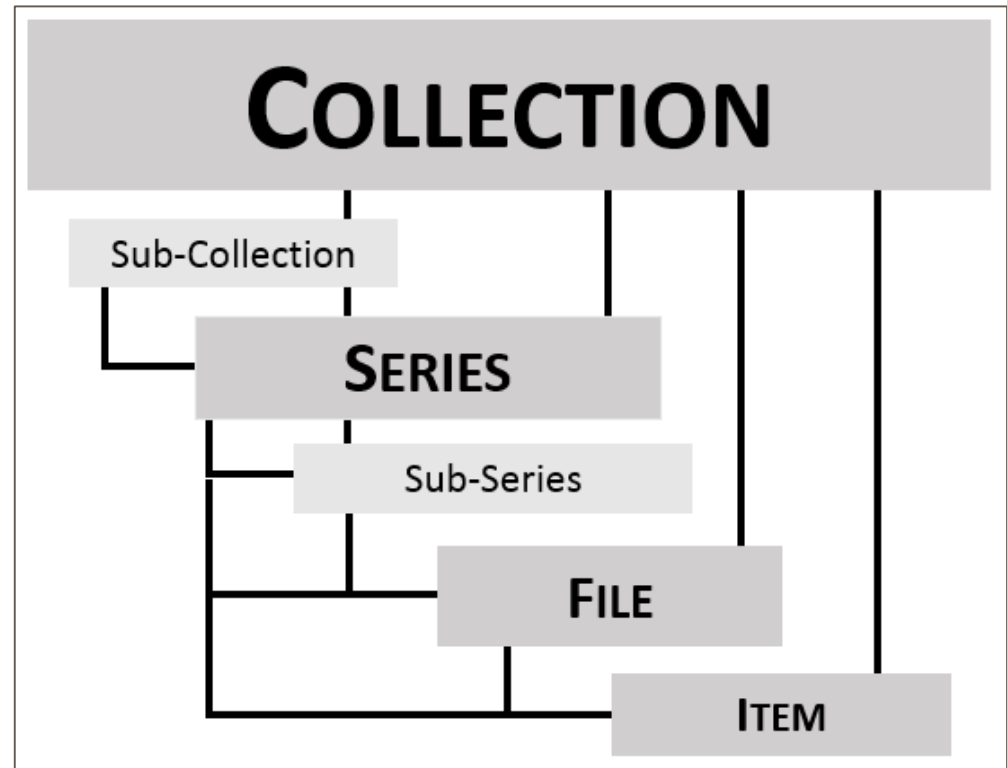 - create a baseline level of access to *all* collections

Archival Processing

What to do:

- Organizing everything

- Basic physical control

- Ensures authenticity

- Actively preserving the context of creation and use
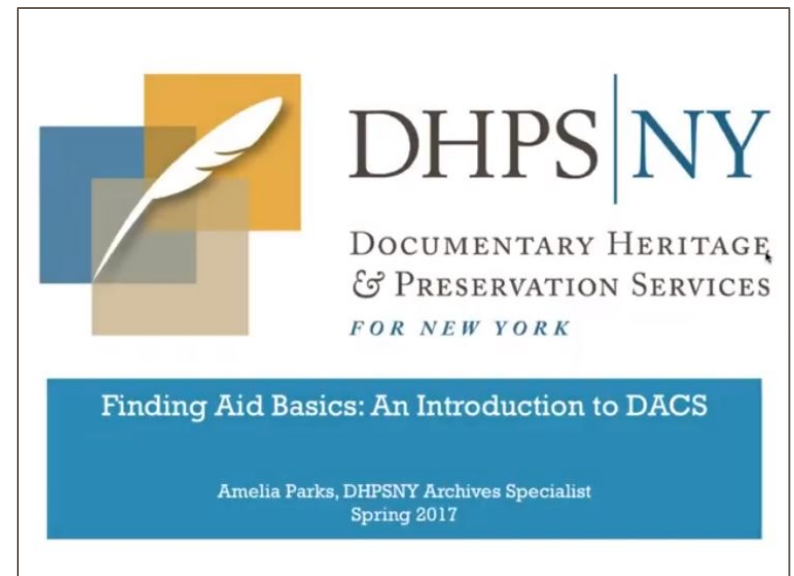
Levels of Processing:

Archival Processing

Finding Aids

- "A tool that facilitates discovery of information within a collection of records." - *SAA*

- Provides context for historical collections

- A way for archivists to succinctly communicate details about a collection to a user
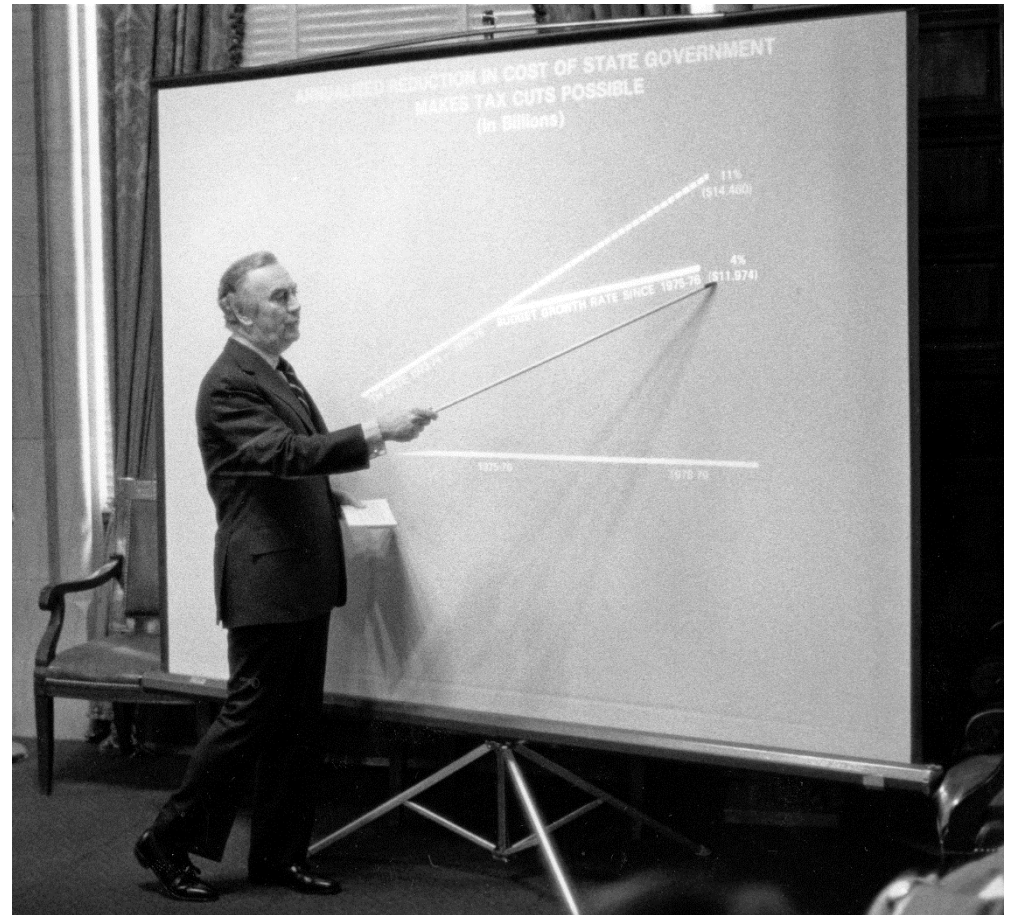
Webinar

Finding Aid Basics: An Introduction to DACS

What is a processing plan?

A preliminary guide for staff or volunteers who are processing collections. The plan provides an overview of any given collection and a structure for understanding the amount of work needed to efficiently and effectively process a collection (to make it accessible and usable).

Governor Carey Briefs Legislature on Budget, New York State Archives, 1978.

Why create a processing plan?

Provides a clearer understanding of the timeline needed to process a collection

Supports accurate resources allocation of staff/volunteer time and required materials

Encourages critical thinking about the collection, its materials, and how to organize it for researchers

Allows for more input from support team and stakeholders; internal documentation

Processing Plan as Treasure Map

University of the West Indies Archives blog, 9/6/2018, https://uwiarchives.wordpress.com/

Why create a processing plan?
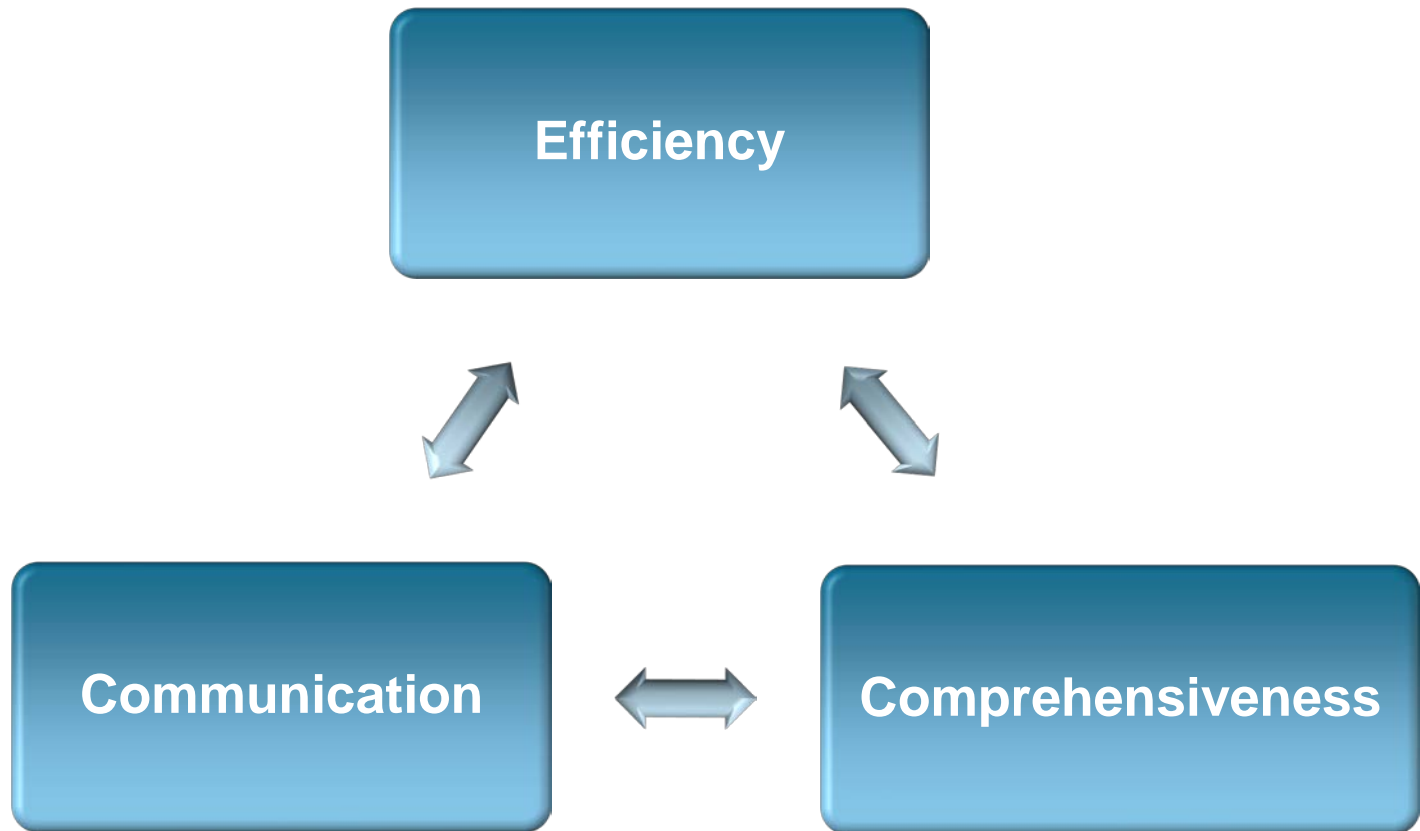
Who?

Adirondack lumberjacks, ca. 1910. New York (State). Department of Conservation.
Photographic prints and negatives, [ca. 1904-1949].

When?

New York City. High school boys reading on Eighth Avenue subway express. New York State Archives, 1934

How?

Key Points

Flexible	Guiding Tool	ID Timeline	Description Output
• The plan can change	• Not prescriptive	• Overall scope of work	• Consider format
• A "living document"	• Adjust arrangements	• Estimate labor required	• Keep this in mind as you survey and arrange
• Elements can differ, based on the collection	• Based on a rough overview	• Who will do the work?	• Access restrictions

Preliminary Research

- Understanding the collection

- Intellectual control

- The more context the better

- Take notes!

Spanish as a second language; Puerto Rican pupils, PS 257, Brooklyn. New York City Municipal Archives, 1964.

Preliminary Research

Administrative

- About the *collection*
- ID restrictions
- Accession records, donor file, correspondence
- Other org's related materials

Biographical/ Historical

- About the collection's *creator*
- Subjects represented, life highlights and key activities
- Accession records, external sources

Preliminary Research

Create and order series

- Sample review materials within the collection
- Understand the key factors for creator and subject

Identify preservation issues

- Note major concerns
- Consider resources needed – including time!

The British Museum Blog, Bridget Leach, "Faith after the pharaohs: Egyptian papyri conservation." December 29, 2015

Questions?

"School of American Ballet," Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library. *The New York Public Library Digital Collections*, 1953.

Processing Plan – Details!

"Sports - Football - Jim Crowley writing on blackboard."
The New York Public Library Digital Collections. 1935 - 1945.

Processing Plan - Details

Overview	Appraisal	Level of Processing
Restricted/ Sensitive	Arrangement	Preservation Needs
Estimated Supplies	Anticipated Time	Next Steps/ Work Summary

Overview

- Collection title, date range, accession numbers

- Creator/donor; custodial history

- Related materials within the repository

- Extent (how much)

- *Brief* description of the material and topics

NY State Archive

Appraisal

- <u>What is the "Research Strength," or *value*, of this material?</u>

- Why do we have this material?

- What does it document?

- How does it fit with the organization's holdings?

- Which parts of the collection have the most interest for researchers?

- Are there materials we have received that have little or no research value?

Harvard Wiki. Schlesinger Library Collection Services: Manuscript Processing Manual and Procedures, "Processing plan template." Last modified Nov 30, 2018.

Levels of Processing

□ Can be based on answers to "Research Strength," condition, and complexity

□ Different levels of "control" for collections

□ Collection, Series, Folder, Item

□ Can be for the full collection
  ■ Or can highlight parts of a collection that might need different levels

Puerto Rican Chicago Archive Project

Restricted/Sensitive content

NY State Archive

□ Copyright considerations – who holds it?

□ What is restricted? How much?

□ By the donor? By the law?

□ Privacy issues
  ◻ Financial data
  ◻ Personal identifying information
  ◻ Student records

Arrangement

- Describe current state, from what can be observed in the collection

- Proposed series titles (and subseries, if applicable)
  - Specificity
  - Explanation
  - Size/extent of each series

- Series order

NY State Archive

Preservation Needs

- Describe issues
  - Both broadly, and with specific items
  - Different issues with various formats

- Describe how the issues will be addressed

- Hiring or questioning external consultants?
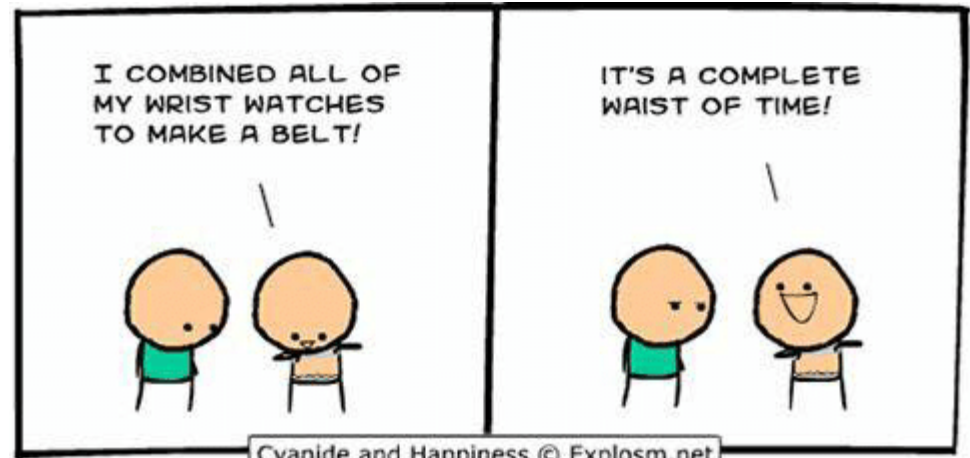 - preservation or conservation specialists

NYU Barbara Goldsmith Preservation & Conservation Department

Estimated Resources

- Supplies
  - Types and sizes of boxes and folders
  - How many?
  - Other supplies – buffer paper, photograph housing
  - Costs

- Time
  - Hours of labor required
  - Delegating tasks
  - Use a Processing Rates chart

By Kris Wilson, 2013

Average processing rate (hours per linear foot) given level of processing effort and condition of the materials

	Poor condition or many barriers to access [16]	Average condition or moderate barriers to access	Excellent condition or few barriers to access
Minimal effort - Collection level	1-3	1-2	1
Low effort - Series or Subseries level	4-8	3-6	2-4
Moderate effort - File level (expedited)	9-14	7-11	5-8
Intensive effort - Folder level	15-21	12-17	9-13
Highly intensive effort - Item level	22+	18+	14+

16. Barriers to access include any characteristic of a collection that might impede user access and require staff attention before a collection may be used productively for research. Barriers to access include disorganization, poor housing, poor description, preservation issues, the presence of special media or other fragile materials, etc.

Next Steps / Work Summary

Use the processing plan as a checklist

"Create a work plan: what steps must be taken during processing, and in what order will you do them? Be specific, and especially make sure you think about all the various formats of material in the collection and other staff you may need to discuss things with." (Harvard)

"[D]escribe… all actions that the processor should take that are not covered in the directions for the entire collection." (NYU)

Next Steps / Work Summary

Collection has good labels on all folders, though lacks consistent arrangement. Proposal will be to divide into two series and arrange folders alphabetically. Original folder titles will be used, with any descriptive enhancements placed in square brackets as necessary.

Series 1: Correspondence (Box #s)
Folders currently in no discernable order, with folder labels indicating name of correspondent. Refolder, maintaining donor folder names, and put in alphabetical order by correspondent last name.

Excerpt – NYU Libraries, Archival Collections Management, *Processing Plan Template*

Example Templates

Archive Processing Plan Form

Collection Accession Number:	
Collection Name:	
Collection Size:	
Description of Collection:	
Current Condition of Collection/Preservation or Conservation Issues:	
Types of Mediums:	
Suggested Levels of Processing (overall description based on processing matrix below):	
Approx. Time Required for Processing:	
Processor Assigned:	

Excerpt - Tribal Libraries, Archives, and Museums (TLAM) Project, at SLIS - UW-Madison

Example Templates

University of Florida – Special and Area Studies Collections
Survey and Processing Plan Worksheet

Title of Collection:	Click here to enter text.			
Date of survey:	Click here to enter text.			
Surveyor(s):	Click here to enter text.			
Creator of Collection:	Click here to enter text.			
Collection Dates:	Click here to enter text.			
Accession Number:	Click here to enter text.	**Collection Number:**	Click here to enter text.	
Acquisition Type:	Click here to enter text.			
Source of Acquisition:	Click here to enter text.			
Deed of Gift:	☐ Yes ☐ No	**Date of gift/acquisition:**	Click here to enter text.	
Curatorial Area:	Click here to enter text.			
Collection Summary: *Give a brief account of the types of materials included and the topics covered.*	Click here to enter text.			

Extent: *Note size of collection and explain any unusual circumstances.*				
	#	Linear feet		
	#	Number of records cartons	#	Number of oversized boxes
	#	Number of volumes (unboxed)		
	#	Number of items (unboxed)		
	#	Oversized material (in flat files or otherwise unboxed)		
	Notes: Click here to enter text.			

Excerpt - University of Florida, Special and Area Studies Collections

Final Steps

- Assess how the work done aligned with your plan – or was different

- Record additional decisions made, time spent, lessons learned, etc.

- Maintain copies with other key documentation about the collection

- Be mindful of transparency – for future archivists and users

"Man writing at a desk." The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Photography Collection, The New York Public Library. 1860 – 1920.

Conclusions
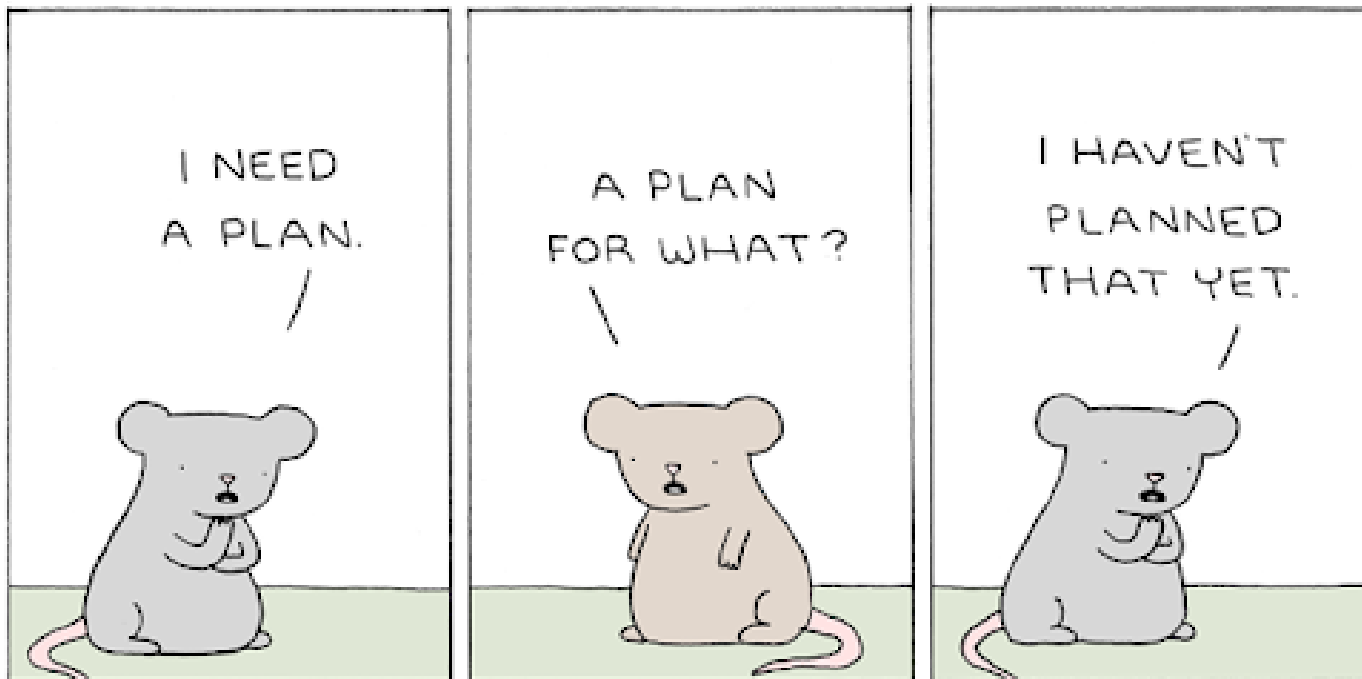
Poorly Drawn Lines, by Reza Farazmand. "A Plan."

We learned what, why, and how –
so now you can plan ahead!

Questions?

A processed collection at the Archives @ PAMA - The Region of Peel's Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives located in Brampton, Ontario, Canada.

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