The Rumble in the Jumble: Coordinating a volunteer collections project (A brief overview ... and a specific case study)

2014 New England Museum Association Conference

Advance preparation:
• Assess the jumble in order to prioritize efforts according to value, use, and risk.
• Set an objective that is manageable and attainable. Then plan your work.
• Assemble a team that is reliable and malleable. Then build your team.
• Prepare the team with relevant training and background. Then follow up.
• Gather materials needed for collections care and records management.

Getting down to work:
• Work your plan. Establish a division of labor, ideally by interest or aptitude.
• Value your team. Feed your team in every way. They will be more productive.
• Be the boss. You’re the professional answer-person. Have the answers.
• Start early. End late. Work smart and work long. This means you.

The “Big Finish”:
• Execute a clean finish: Logically organized, secure, stable, and well-documented according to current best-practices.
• Ensure that the next encounter with the material will not be a stumble on a jumble. (Be kind to your successor.)
• Ensure that your volunteer team will be viewed in the future as heroes, not hacks. (They might even come back for more work.)