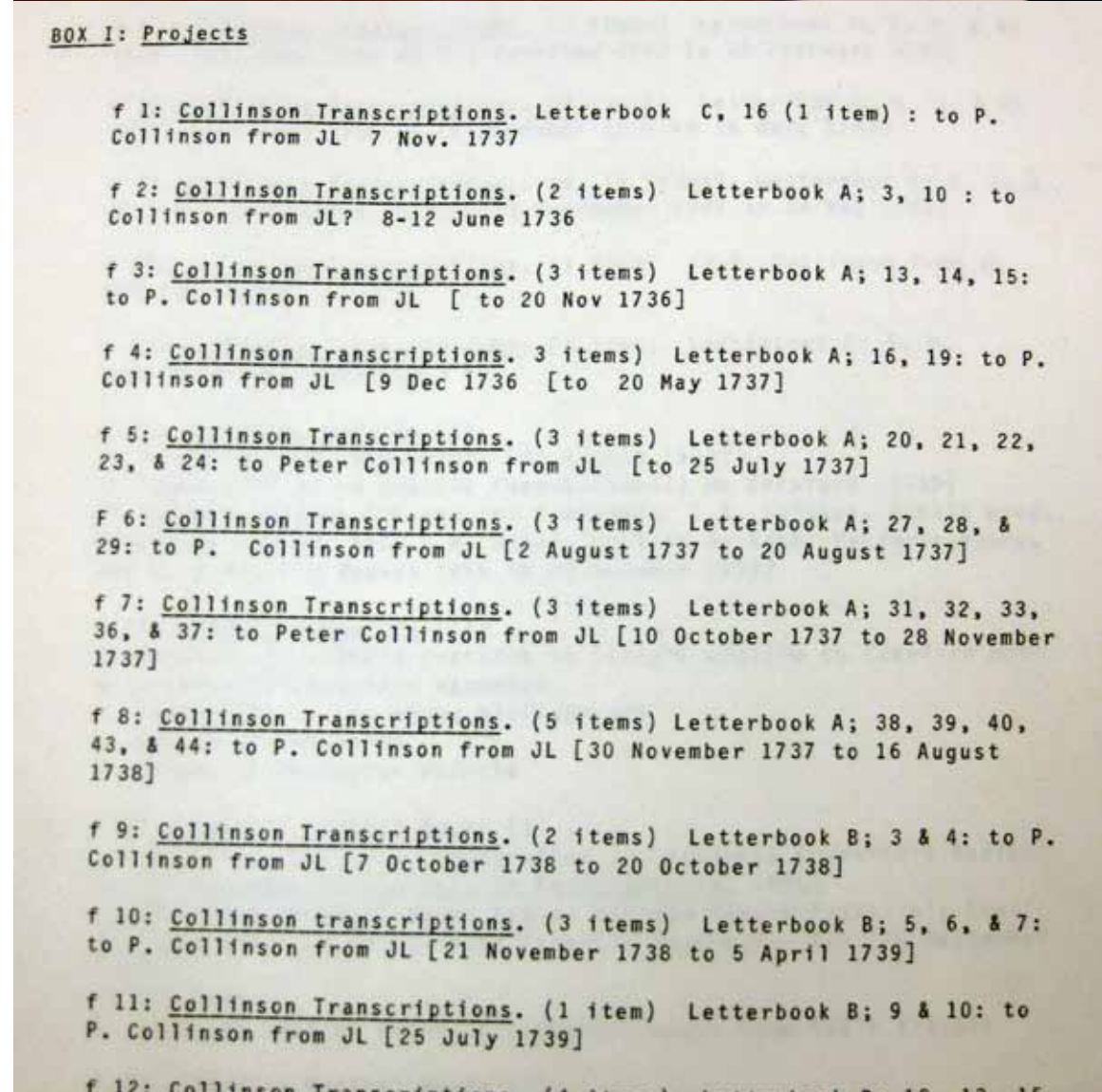


# Reprocessing: The Trials and Tribulations of Previously Processed Collections

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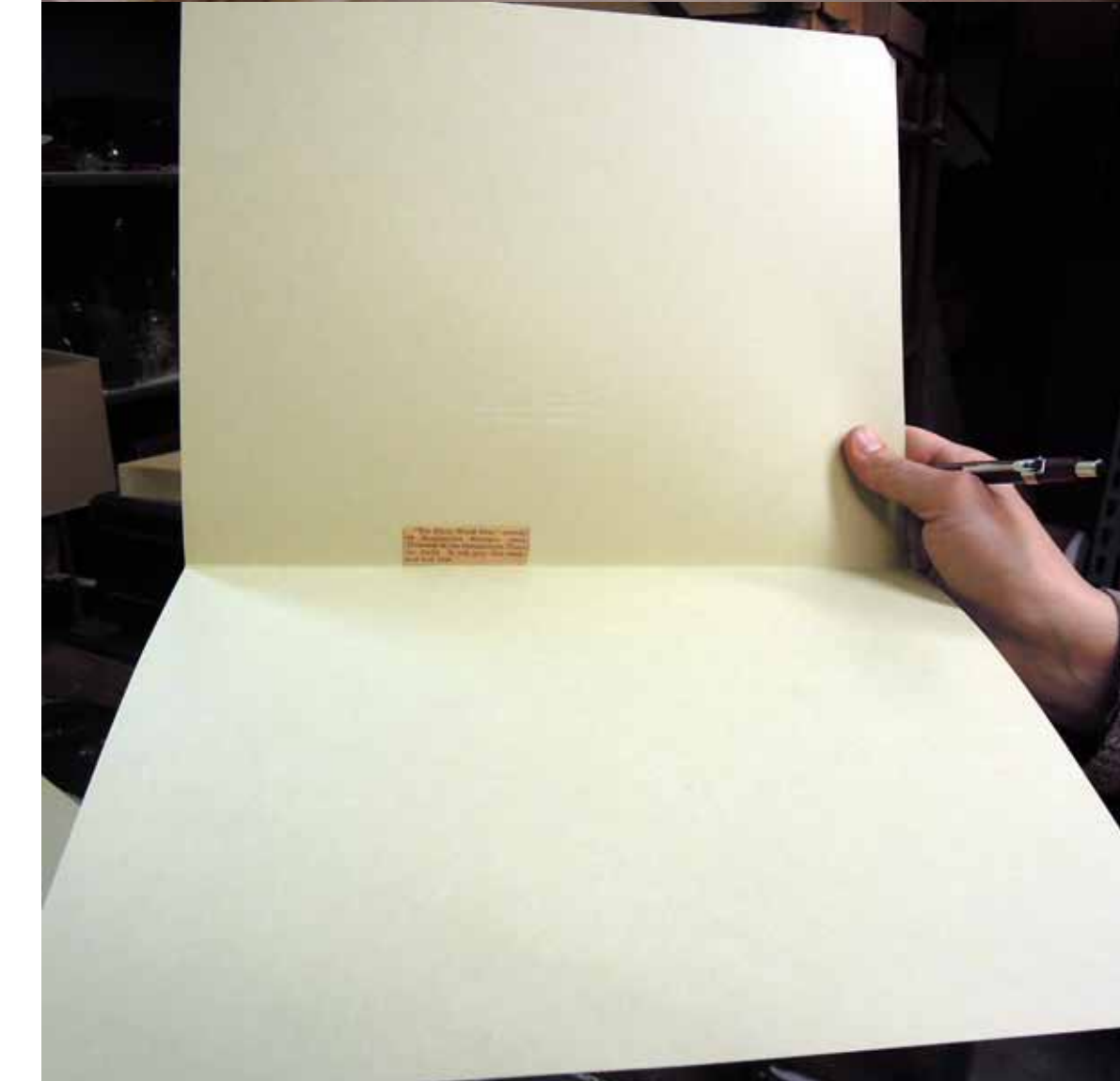
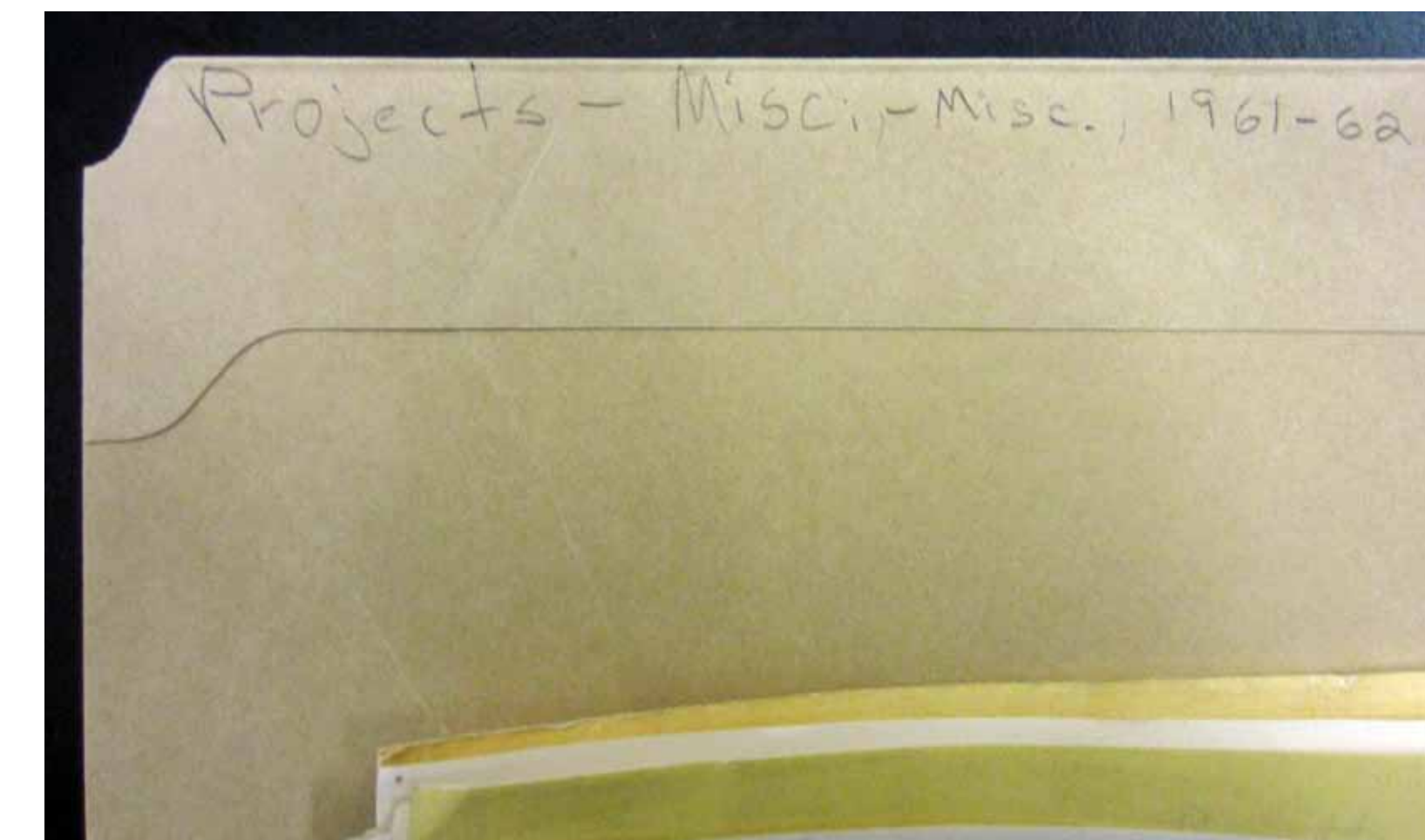
## OVERVIEW

PACSCL's current project, "Uncovering Philadelphia's Past: A Regional Solution to Revealing Hidden Collections," will process 46 high research value collections, totaling 1,539 linear feet, from 16 Philadelphia-area institutions that document life in the region. Project plans have evolved over the course of the project due to previous processing in many collections. As the processing teams tackled the collections, the solutions devised for the various challenges they encountered developed into a helpful body of information regarding minimal processing. Future archivists and collaborators can use this knowledge to choose appropriate collections for minimal processing projects, and be prepared to handle unexpected challenges as they arise.



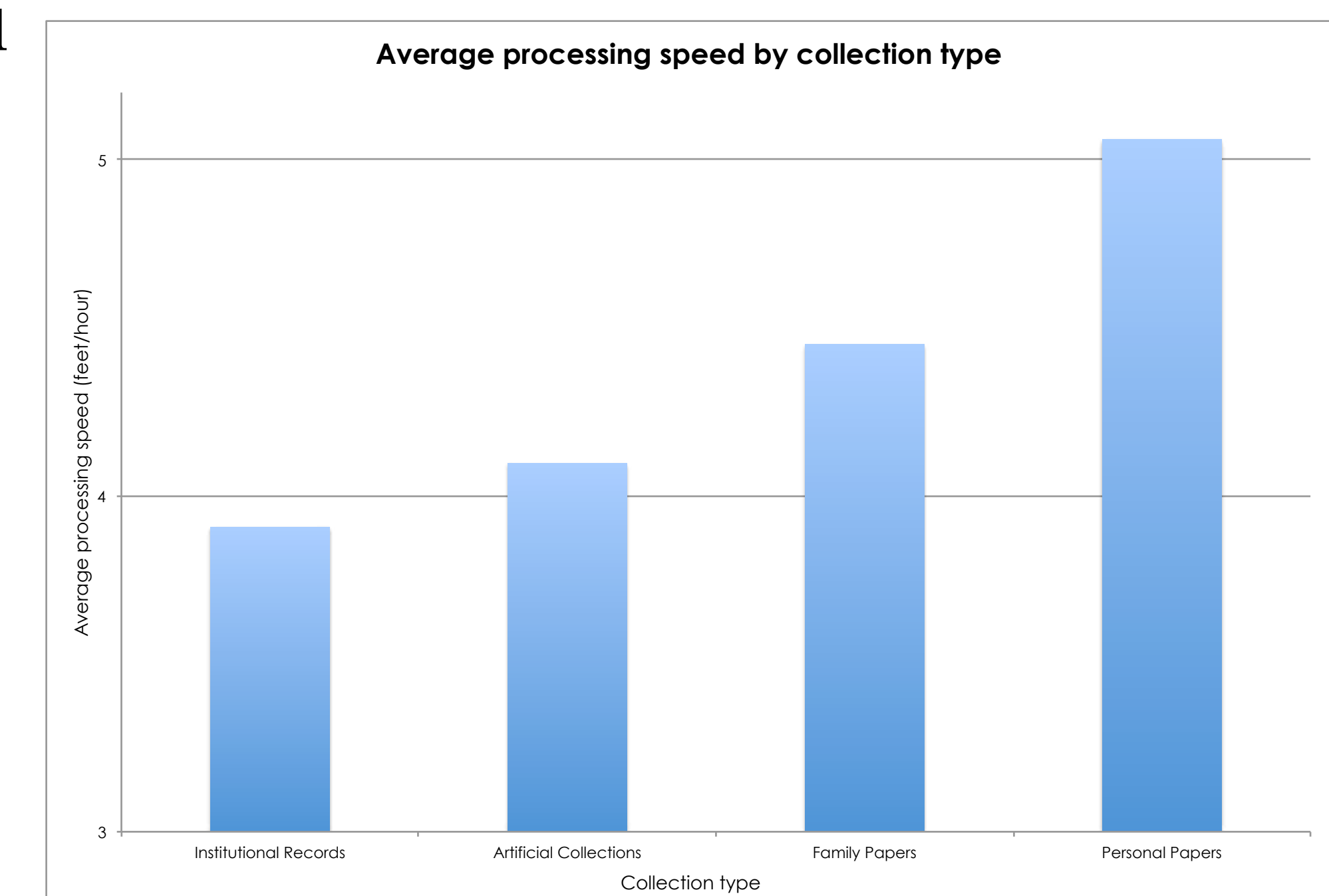
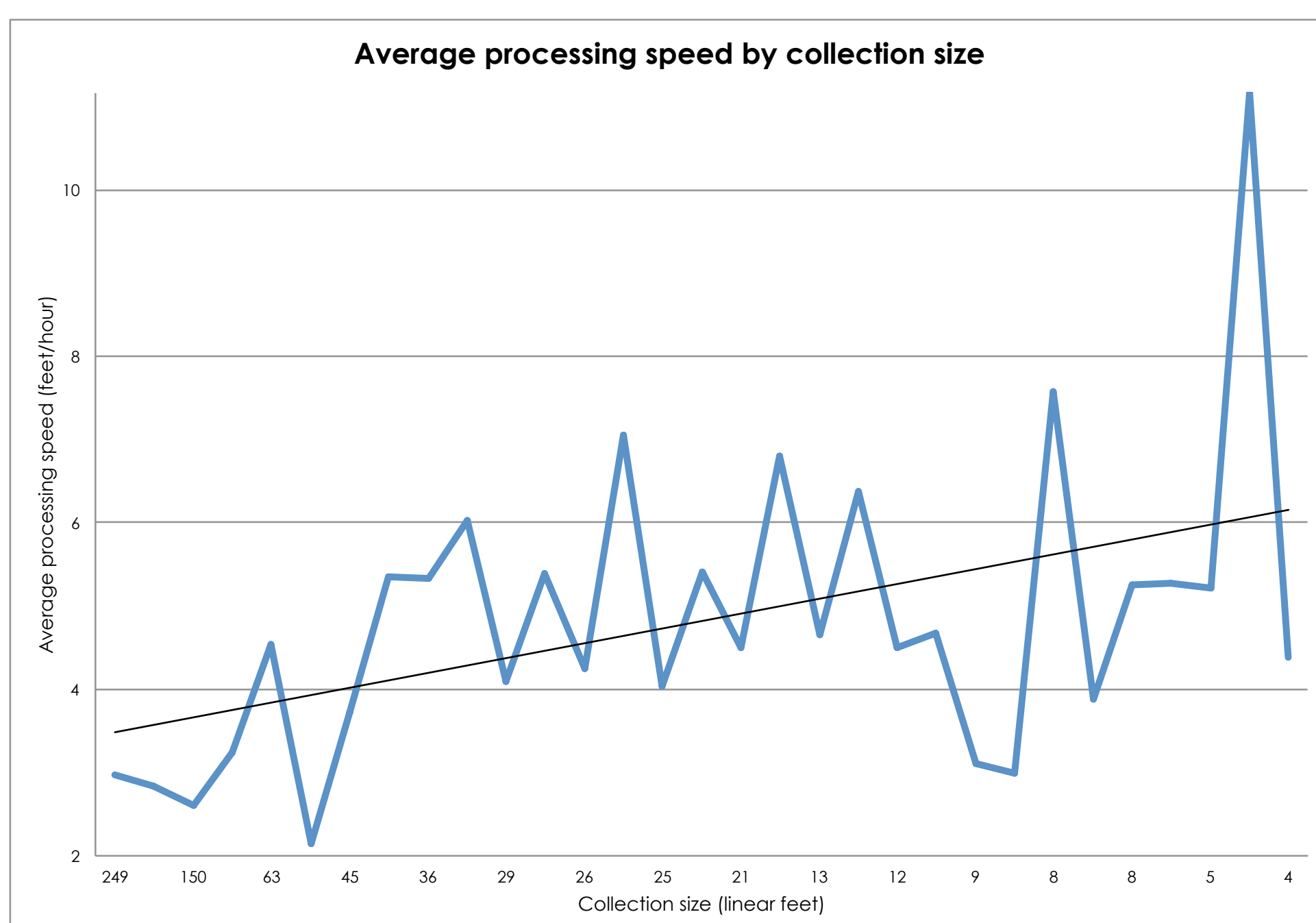
## ISSUES

- **Novice Archivists:** Volunteers and untrained archivists, while well-meaning, can make simple mistakes that lead to larger problems.
- **Losing Original Order:** Processors may disrupt original order through poor arrangement, item-level processing, and removing items for exhibits.
- **Item-Level Processing:** While reprocessing this material can slow project speeds, mindful work will greatly benefit the collection through increased levels of access.
- **Legacy Finding Aids:** It can be difficult to tell how accurate an existing finding aid is, and the decisions made on how much of it to preserve can be complicated.
- **Collection Size and Type:** Average processing speeds increase with larger collections and institutional records versus slower speeds with smaller collections and personal papers.
- **Donor Relations:** Donors may also have been the previous processors; this can add a layer of politics to the work of the project.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Work closely with current staff; understand the history of the collection and the desired shape of its future.
- Learn about previous processors to understand their training, background, and history with the records.
- Edit and expand upon non-descriptive terms (e.g., miscellaneous) when possible. More detailed descriptions can assist in linking separated records back together.
- Merge clippings and reference files together when feasible.
- Make note of reprocessing decisions in the finding aid.
- Proofread any reused documents or folder titles, keeping ideas of consistency in mind.
- Be mindful of donor relationships in discussing past problems, especially in any public forum, such as a project blog.
- Plan carefully from the outset. If possible, choose collections that best fit the project goals.
- Remain flexible and be prepared to compromise.



see more at [clir.pacscl.org/blog](http://clir.pacscl.org/blog)