

**Society of American Archivists  
Council Conference Call  
February 6, 2017  
2:00 – 3:30 EST**

**Revision of Technical Subcommittee on Describing Archives:  
A Content Standard Description  
(Prepared by TS-DACS Co-Chairs Maureen Callahan and Adrien Hilton)**

**BACKGROUND**

The Technical Subcommittee on Describing Archives: A Content Standard has, in the last three years, expanded its work to address its whole charge—particularly the directive to produce archivists “who are capable of promoting and maintaining DACS over time.” We have endeavored to move beyond the blue book to bring DACS to archivists and make its relevance clear in their lives. However, our most significant barrier is not having enough members to fulfill our goals.

We would like to make two substantive changes to our charge. The first is to allow for TS-DACS to be led by one or two co-chairs (depending on the subcommittee’s own sense of its needs) and the second is to expand the membership from six regular members to seven. Finally, we would like to make a minor but, to our minds meaningful, change —instead of stating that all members *shall* be experts in DACS, we encourage stronger language that all members *must* be DACS experts.

**DISCUSSION**

**Technical Subcommittee Co-Chairs**

Since 2015, TS-DACS has been led by co-chairs. Hillel Arnold and Maureen Callahan served as co-chairs in 2015-2016, and now, since 2016, Maureen Callahan and Adrien Hilton have been the subcommittee’s co-chairs. Each leader has found that effective leadership requires more work than one volunteer would be able to provide. We hope that the Council will be willing to change our charge to match our current reality of two co-chairs. We also believe that leadership requires autonomy, and would hope that future leaders will have the opportunity to decide for themselves whether one chair or two is sufficient.

## Number of Members

Currently we are engaged in three massive projects (the complete revision of DACS principles; the roll-out of a completely revised DACS workshop; and the kick-off of a communication strategy to help SAA membership become aware of this important new work) as well as two normal maintenance activities (manage change requests to DACS as they come and monitor companion standards). We are deeply fortunate that the vast majority of members of TS-DACS are committed to this work and bring skill and expertise. However, we have found that each year we end up with one or two members who find that they are not able to contribute as much as they would like—or as we would like them to. We believe that addition of an extra member may help balance the workload and allow for a more humane approach to getting through the year’s business. After all, we want to be able to keep members who have wisdom to contribute even if they are not able, because of temporary personal or professional circumstances, to contribute the one to two hours per week we ask and expect.

## Member Expertise

It is not possible to effectively contribute to the work of the technical subcommittee without deep expertise with DACS. Although the meaning of the charge will not change, we hope that the use of the word “must” will send a stronger message about what we look for in appointees.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

**THAT the description of the Technical Subcommittee on Describing Archives: A Content Standard (TS-DACS) be revised as follows (*strikethrough* = deletion, *underline* = addition):**

#### **Technical Subcommittee on Describing Archives: A Content Standard (TS-DACS)**

##### **I. Purpose**

The Technical Subcommittee for *Describing Archives: A Content Standard* (TS-DACS) of the SAA Standards Committee is responsible for overseeing the timely and ongoing intellectual and technical maintenance and development of *Describing Archives: A Content Standard* (DACS). DACS is an output-neutral set of rules for describing archives, personal papers, and manuscript collections, and can be applied to all material types. DACS is compatible with ISAD(G): General International Standard Archival Description, 2nd ed. (International Council on Archives, 1999) and ISAAR(CPF): International Standard Archival Authority Records for Corporate Bodies, Persons and Families, 2nd ed. (International Council on Archives, 2003). DACS is an SAA-approved standard; documentation for DACS is available through the Society of American Archivists at <http://www.archivists.org/governance/standards/dacs.asp>.

##### **II. Committee Selection, Size, and Length of Term**

The technical subcommittee shall be composed of ~~seven~~ seven regular members (including as well as one or two chairs, depending on the needs of the technical subcommittee, at the prerogative of the current chair(s).) All members shall be appointed by the SAA Vice President / President-Elect for staggered three-year terms so that a minimum of two individuals are appointed by the Vice President each year. All members ~~shall~~ must demonstrate significant knowledge of and experience with archival description generally, and with DACS specifically.

All members of TS-DACS shall be recommended by the Standards Committee for appointment by the SAA Vice President. The chair(s) will be selected from existing TS-DACS membership and appointed for a three year term. The chair(s) and members of TS-DACS may be reappointed for one consecutive term.

*Ex officio* members of the Technical Subcommittee on DACS shall include the following if they are not regular members of the subcommittee:

- Co-chairs of the Standards Committee;
- Chair of the Description Section;
- Society of American Archivists' representative to Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access (CC:DA);
- Society of American Archivists' representative to the MARC Advisory Committee;
- Society of American Archivists' representative to International Council on Archives Experts Group on Archival Description (ICA-EGAD) [formerly International Council on Archives Committee on Best Practices and Standards].

### **III. Reporting Procedures**

The chair(s) of the Technical Subcommittee on *DACS* shall report at least annually to the chair(s) of the SAA Standards Committee on the occasion of the SAA Annual Meeting. If extramural funding is obtained by SAA, the chair(s) shall provide all necessary narrative reports to the SAA office in order that the reporting requirements of SAA and the funding source are met.

### **IV. Duties and Responsibilities**

To fulfill this mission, TS-DACS is specifically charged to:

- Carry out a review of *Describing Archives: A Content Standard* on an ongoing basis.
- Promote the understanding and use of DACS by the American archival community.
- Support educational efforts related to DACS by SAA.
- Develop members of the archives profession who are capable of promoting and maintaining DACS over time.
- Communicate its activities to relevant SAA components.
- Foster communication between other entities developing standards related to DACS.
- Work to ensure that DACS is compatible with other national and international descriptive standards.

TS-DACS shall work within the guidelines for ongoing review of an SAA-adopted standard, and may develop more detailed procedures for meeting those requirements.

### **VI. Meetings**

TS-DACS shall carry out its charge primarily via electronic mail, regular mail, and conference calls. It shall meet at the SAA Annual Meeting and as necessary, provided that SAA Council-approved funding is available.

*Approved by the SAA Council: February 2010*

*Revised: January 2011; August 2013; February 2017*

**Support Statement:** *Not provided by submitters.*

**Relation to Strategic Plan:** *Not provided by submitters.*

**Fiscal Impact:** *Not provided by submitters.*