EAD Revision – Points of Emphasis

The Technical Subcommittee for Encoded Archival Description is charged with the creation of a third, revised edition of EAD. The goal of this project is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of EAD as a standard for the electronic representation of descriptions of archival materials and a tool for the preservation and presentation of such data and its interchange between systems.

In carrying out this charge, the Committee's work will focus on, but not be limited to, the following points of emphasis for the new version of EAD.

1. Achieving greater conceptual and semantic consistency in the use of EAD.

The flexibility of EAD encoding - although in many ways a virtue or even a necessity – has led in some cases to needlessly complicated implementation and use of the standard. Where prudent, the committee will eliminate alternative methods for encoding a given descriptive convention; identify more clearly, find alternative solutions for, deprecate the use of, or eliminate elements that are strictly presentational rather than descriptive in nature; and minimize the use of mixed content.

These changes will make EAD instances more consistent in their content and thereby easier to exchange, present, and interpret; simpler and less expensive to implement and maintain; and more straightforward in their management in various electronic environments.

2. Exploring mechanisms whereby EAD-encoded information might more seamlessly and effectively connect with, exchange, or incorporate data maintained according to other protocols.

3. Improving the functionality of EAD for representing descriptive information created in international and particularly in multilingual environments.

While EAD 2002 provided additional functionality to support its use in international environments, further modifications are required to provide the features needed by the entire EAD community.

4. Being mindful that a new version will affect current users.

The committee will carefully and seriously consider the needs and ideas of current EAD users, the impacts of any revisions on the substantial base of existing EAD XML instances, and the investment of the community in existing EAD-related systems, tools, protocols, and training.   The committee will strive to ensure that no existing data will be lost in migration to the new version and that stylesheets or other automated conversion tools will be provided to affect that transfer, as was the case between the first and second editions of EAD.