



Piecing Together the Archival Puzzle: EAD Finding Aids Used for Online Presentation of Fully Digitized Collections at the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution

Website link to fully digitized collections: <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collectionsonline/>

Link to documentation: http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/terra_collections_list.cfm

Collections Online is an online resource at the Archives of American Art that solves the archival puzzle of how to provide access to collections that are digitized in their entirety. The solution rests upon utilizing the collection's EAD finding aid and providing **access to the digitized documents through folder level access**.

Once the archivist completes the finding aid for a collection to be digitized, the XML file is uploaded through a web interface to the Archives' SQL Server Digital Collections Database, and transformed into a Finding Aid Record. The Finding Aid Record in the database contains all of the EAD descriptive and component information, such as series, sub-series, folder headings, box numbers, and folder numbers. The same finding aid is also used to generate the directory structure used by the scanning technician for saving the digital files, resulting in a scanning framework that follows the same organization and arrangement as the originals. Using ColdFusion programming, the Finding Aid Record and the Digital Resource Record stored in the database are then deposited into the *Collections Online* template and interface. Other automated features assign a representative image to each series description for a graphically appealing and easy to use web presentation that allows users to view and navigate the digital files within their archival context and hierarchy.

Since 2005, over 70 collections, comprising 625 linear feet and 650,000 documents, have been made available in *Collections Online*. The development of this innovative approach has been made possible with funding from the Terra Foundation for American Art.

For further information contact:

Karen Weiss, Project Director, weissk@si.edu

Barbara Aikens, Chief of Collections Processing, aikensb@si.edu