

**Date:** September 13, 2007

**Name of Section/Roundtable:** Description

**Officers:** Jane Rosario (Chair, 2005-2007), Mark Matienzo (Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect, 2006-2008), Michelle Light (*Descriptive Notes* Editor), Diane Ducharme (Web Liaison), Steering Committee: Christopher Burns, Mary Lacy, C. Jerry Simmons, D. Claudia Thompson, Katherine Wisser (Past Chair), Christopher Prom (*ex-officio*, as Chair of TSDS)

**Report from annual meeting:**

- Number of attendees: 142
- Election results: James Roth, Vice-Chair/Chair Elect, 2007-2009
- Summary of meeting activities:  
See attached meeting minutes, prepared by Michelle Light.

**Completed projects/activities**

Last fall, the Section reviewed three proposals and endorsed two to the Program Committee; all proposals made it to the 2007 Program.

Reports from the Section meeting put up on the Description Section web site.

Elections: Two candidates ran, James Roth and Erin Lawrimore.

Held meeting of the Section leadership on 9/1/2007 in Chicago, to thank leadership, welcome Mark as Chair, and Michael Rush, who is the new Chair of TSDS, succeeding Chris Prom.

Evaluation of meeting content and format gathered from attendees.

**Ongoing projects/activities**

Mary Lacy has kept the Description Section Leadership apprised of the progress of *Resource Description and Access*; Mary is stepping down from being the liaison to CC:DA, and we want to thank her for her excellent work. Lisa Carter is succeeding Mary in this and we hope to keep up a strong relationship with her.

**New projects/activities**

Section Leadership must re-write the bylaws to conform to Council's new policies and procedures.

Improve elections/voting; explore online voting as an option.

Explore ways to better use the web site, email, and electronic resources to disseminate information.

**Diversity initiatives**

The Description Section is open to membership to all. More outreach projects regarding diversity should be undertaken, however.

**Questions/concerns for Council attention**

It does not really seem equitable that Sections of a few hundred members and Roundtables of 50 members have the same number of endorsements. Is there any discussion to change this?

As soon-to-be Past Chair, I'd like to once again thank the Section members and leadership for all their support and contributions.

## **Description Section Meeting Minutes**

August 31, 2007

12:00-2:00 p.m.

Notes recorded by Michelle Light

### **I. Welcome and Section Reports**

#### **A. Newsletter Editor: Michelle Light**

Two issues of *Descriptive Notes* were posted to the SAA website in the past year. Please continue to send news items and short articles to michelle.light@gmail.com

#### **B. Description Expo: Mark Matienzo**

10 institutions contributed 13 submissions to this year's Description Expo. This year's Expo did not have a formal theme, and unlike previous years, the Expo did not have a staffed booth in the Exhibit Area. Instead, the Expo was at a table in the registration/lobby area at the Fairmont Chicago. This year's submissions include finding aids, delivery systems, and other descriptive tools. They are available on the web at <http://matienzo.org/Saa2007DescriptionExpo/>.

#### **C. Chair: Jane Rosario**

There will be changes to the Description Section's by-laws in order to be compliant with the "Revised Policies and Procedures for SAA Sections and Roundtables" as passed by Council in May 2007: <http://www.archivists.org/governance/SectRTPolicies.pdf>. Next year, the Section will elect two more members to the Steering Committee.

In order to ensure there is enough time for the program, Jane asked for full reports in advance and for representatives to give brief synopses at the Section meeting. The full reports are available online from the Description Section's web page.

### **II. Reports from SAA Committees, Liaisons, and Related Groups**

#### **A. SAA Council Representative: Ben Primer**

Council approved changes to the governance, support, and communication of SAA's sections and roundtables. The revised guidelines are available on SAA's website. The changes recognize how Sections contribute to SAA's vitality. The revisions provide broader opportunities for leadership with term limits, and they guarantee Sections the space and time to meet at the annual meetings, among other things. Sections will have a couple of years to come into compliance with the new changes.

A dues increase is under consideration at the Business meeting. The proposal is for a 10% increase for all membership categories, except for a new top category which will

be increased by 20%. The increase is due to new demands for services and activities, particularly advocacy and the need for a presence in D.C. Membership has grown 38% since 1999, and 20% of members are students, the lowest paying membership category. The last dues increase was in 1999. Dues pay for less than 25% of SAA's costs; comparable organizations rely on dues for 35% of their costs. SAA is currently too dependent on revenue from workshops and the annual meeting.

#### B. DACS Working Group: Bill Landis

His full report is available online.

The DACS group was constituted this year and reports through the Standards Committee. The group reflects diverse interests and specialties. There will be a DACS webpage at <http://www.archivists.org/DACS> that will include information about the group's activities as well as a web-based comment form for submissions. Council put DACS on a 5-year revision cycle, which will happen in 2009. A timeline will be posted within the year. There will be a forum for public discussion at the San Francisco meeting. The group will also be doing outreach to communities specializing in special formats, such as to the rare manuscript community for describing single-item manuscripts, the recorded sound and moving image communities, and visual image community. If you are part of a community with special needs that should be considered in DACS, email Bill at [bill.landis@yale.edu](mailto:bill.landis@yale.edu).

#### C. ALA Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access (CC:DA): Mary Lacy

Mary has been active with the constituency review of RDA. Her full report, with links to comments and drafts, is available online. An RDA element vocabulary is being developed. There has been criticism of that RDA did not clearly reflect the principles upon which it was to be based, so there is an effort to make them more front and center. This year, Chapters 6 & 7 and a revised Chapter 3 were released for constituency review. What work is there left to do for archivists? We should make sure our suggestions remain in the drafts, that rules for family names are satisfactory, and that RDA clearly direct archivists to the appropriate national and international standards (such as DACS) whether or not the list of standards is found within RDA or its website. RDA is meant to be a tool for the generalist; for specialized formats, one should look elsewhere. Mary is rotating off the committee. Lisa Carter is the new liaison. RDA will come out in 2009.

#### D. ICA Section on Professional Standards and Best Practices: Claire Sibille

Her full report is available online.

A working group of the Committee of Best Practices and Standards of the International Council of Archives (ICA/CBPS) is developing a new International Standard for Describing Functions (ICA-ISDF). Functions and activities are used by records managers to analyse and classify records, rather than an administrative and organisational structure. A draft of the standard was circulated to the international

archival community for comment in January-March 2007. More than 30 pages of comments were received. The definitive version of ICA-ISDF will be presented at the next ICA meeting in Malaysia in 2008.

Another project concerns the description of institutions with archival holdings (ISIAH – International Standard for Institutions with Archival Holdings). It will provide general information about archival institutions and the services they provide. It may be useful for generating authority lists or directories of archival institutions. Some archival descriptive systems already contain separate but linked descriptions of records, records creators and custodians and exemplify ISIAH, for example, the UK's ARCHON or Spain's Censo Guia. The draft of standard is available on ICA website; comments should be received by October 31, 2007.

E. Technical Subcommittee on Descriptive Standards (TSDS): Chris Prom

TSDS develops, maintains, reviews, and promulgates descriptive standards. This year, TSDS reviewed ISDF. The comments are available on the TSDS website. TSDS also put together an EAC working group. There are 12 members with a significant international component. EAC currently is in the BETA version; the group will develop EAC into a formal standard.

F. Encoded Archival Context (EAC) Working Group: Kathy Wisser

The EAC working group has not met yet, but they hope to get funding for a meeting. They submitted a grant in January 2007 for funding, and it is still pending. The group will post progress reports on the web. So far, they have established an email list and are trying to work virtually. They will try to meet informally at SAA.

G. OCLC/Research Libraries Group: Jennifer Schaffner

ArchiveGrid has been successfully migrated to OCLC.

The RLIN 21 client was retired on August 31. RLIN used to keep history of NACO/SACO changes; OCLC has now decided to track this history. One difference between RLIN and OCLC was that RLIN kept institutional bibliographic records, while OCLC kept master records. OCLC has decided to adopt institutional records, and 100 million institutional records are being loaded into WorldCat. Records for archival holdings are institutional records by default.

The work agenda of RLG is as follows: 1) They are studying research behaviors for requirements at a network level. 2) They are researching relationships among libraries, archives, and museums. 3) They are investigating the curation of collective collections, for example, partnership agreements in mass digitization. The forum on digitization matters was part of this. 4) They are looking into metadata practices, particularly tools for sharing metadata.

#### H. OCLC: Susan Westberg

OCLC is working on a registry.

Connexion now has support for non-Latin scripts. You can now use the RLIN 21 keyboards for Cyrillic, Arabic, and other languages. MARC 21 macros were converted. MARC fields 541 and 583 now have guided entries.

OCLC is offering new terminology services, for example, searching multiple thesauri.

OCLC is partnering with DLF to register digital masters, so you can see if others have digitized an item according to best practices standards. Anyone can view this; it is available on the DLF website.

#### I. RBMS Bibliographic Standards Committee Manuscripts Working Group: Diane Ducharme

RBMS formed a new committee in June to formulate standards for description of single-item manuscripts. Margaret Nichols in the chair; Diane Ducharme is SAA's liaison. The chair has formed a reading list. A timeline should be available by ALA Midwinter.

#### J. 2008 Program Committee: Matt Darby

The theme is Archival R/Evolution & Identities. It will look at who we are, where we are, and where are we going. It will focus on SAA's three action items: technology, diversity, and public awareness. The deadline for proposals in October 12. See the web for selection criteria and the submission form.

Jane Rosario encouraged people to use the Description listserv to talk about potential sessions.

#### K. EAD Working Group & ALA Committee on Machine-Readable Bibliographic Information Committee (MARBI): Kris Keisling

The EAD scheme went out in May. The third European conference on EAD, EAC, and METS occurred in Berlin; 7 members of the EAD working group gave papers. The conference papers are available online. The working group is also considering a conference in the U.S. for EAD's 10th anniversary.

MARBI is quiet. There is an ongoing project at the University of North Texas on how MARC fields are used in databases. Not even 5% use the 520 field for describing archival materials. There was also a project to bring the German flavor of MARC into MARC 21.

### III. New Business

#### A. Election

James Roth and Erin Lawrimore were candidates for chair. James Roth won.

#### B. Archivists' Toolkit: Sibyl Roud

Roud summarized the functionality and advantages of using the Archivist's Toolkit (AT); she also provided a brief history of the project. For more information, see <http://www.archiviststoolkit.org/>. In phase 2, beginning in February 2007, AT staff will work on refining the AT's performance and getting rid of bugs, will develop batch import functionality, will work towards sustainability, and will offer support for MSSQL and Oracle. Version 1.1. will be out soon, and it features an enhanced acquisition module.

#### C. Archon: Chris Prom

Prom explained that Archon is a distant cousin of the AT and financed by the University of Illinois for internal purposes. It differs from the AT in that it runs on a web browser. They started a new version about 2 months ago, and it became available last week. It added a research cart feature so researchers can store finding aids. It provides multi-lingual support, and is moving towards more modular code. Over the next year, they are building an accessions module and will make it more compatible with ISAAR and EAC. Ten institutions are using in a production mode. For more information, see <http://archon.org/>.

#### C. Canadian Committee on Archival Description: Gerald Stone

There is a new chair of the committee, Sherry Watson. They have met twice since last year. They completed a new version of RAD, adding statement of principles and a chapter for discrete items, and allowing series as the highest level of description. The Library & Archives of Canada did a compact version of RAD that will be available on the web soon.

#### D. Comments from the Floor

Doris Malkmus urged the Description Section to get involved with Content DM as it is developing a finding aid platform.

### **IV. Program**

Context-Schmontext: Contextual Information Innovations in Archival Description

Peter Hymas, State Library of North Carolina

Dennis Meissner, Minnesota Historical Society

Daniel Pitti, University of Virginia

Katherine M. Wisser, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (Chair)

This panel examined the role of contextual information in archival description and focused on the theory and implementation of the beta standard Encoded Archival Context (EAC). . . . .  
Wisser gave a general introduction to the EAC standard, including an overview of the structure and elements in the beta standard. Meissner presented on the importance of context information in assisting description and access activities, including solutions implemented prior to the development of the EAC standard. Hymas discussed the NCBHIO project, which seeks to create a union EAC repository for North Carolina. Pitti explored XML functionality built into the beta standard that can be leveraged by EAC projects.