Society of American Archivists
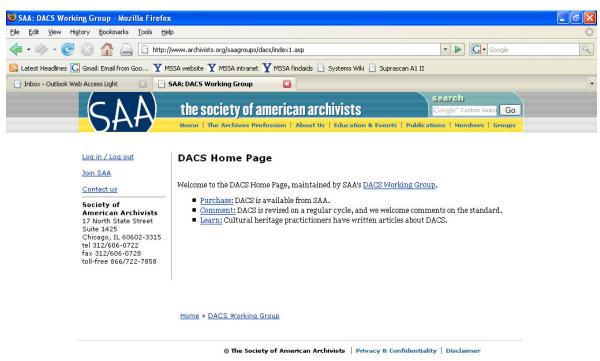# DACS Working Group Annual Report
August 2008
(Prepared by: Bill Landis)

This report is being submitted to inform the Standards Committee, the organizational home of the DACS Working Group (DACS WG) within SAA, and other interested SAA units and members about the activities of the DACS WG.

The following are members of the DACS WG:

- Prudence Backman, New York State Archives
- Kate Bowers, Harvard University
- Teresa Brinati, SAA (staff representative)
- Chatham Ewing, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
- Marcy Flynn, Silver Image Management
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- Lynn Holdzkom, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- Mary Lacy, Library of Congress
- Bill Landis, Yale University (chair)
- Andrea Leigh, UCLA Film & Television Archive
- Kathy Steiner, The Henry Ford

The DACS WG has communicated during the past year using its SAA-sponsored distribution list (dacs-wg@forums.archivists.org). The working group has begun the process of creating a DACS information site (http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/dacs/index1.asp), which is currently in prototype (see below) and will be discussed by the WG at its meeting in San Francisco on August 26 and hopefully made public shortly thereafter.

The information page will contain information about how to purchase DACS, a bibliography of articles that have appeared in print that discuss DACS, and a link to an web form that directs e-mail to the members of the DACS WG. This web form will be the principle venue for communicating suggestions, questions, and issues regarding DACS to members of the working group. In addition, the DACS WG will be discussing possibilities for other links to continuing education opportunities relating to DACS, companion standards recommended for use with DACS, and additional examples of descriptive outputs that utilize DACS. Once the information page is publicly available, the DACS WG will maintain and enhance it in response to needs identified by the community of DACS users.

The working group has been active in several of the areas outlined in its charge in the time period since its last report (September 2007-August 2008). Activities are summarized below.

Development of Companion Standards

This past year was a particularly active year in terms of development of companion standards. DACS represents a forward-looking approach to a U.S. content standard for archival description. It focuses on principles and rules for the description of the higher levels of aggregation at which archivists typically manage their collections, and envisions a suite of companion standards that U.S. archivists can use when needed to describe specific formats of archival materials at lower levels of description approaching the item. This departure from the typical, one-stop shopping model of many predecessor content standards opens up a space for dialog and collaboration with communities of format-specialists in the archives, library, and museum worlds. The DACS WG has spent a significant part of the past year developing relationships with several of these format-specific communities, collaborating on the development of new standards that will hopefully serve U.S. archivists well if and when their description program requires them to describe at the item level.

- The DACS WG is collaborating with the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section (RBMS) of the Association of College and Research Libraries, a division of the American Library Association, on the development of a format-specific content standard for single-item manuscripts. The chair of the RBMS Bibliographic Standards Committee appointed a Manuscripts Working Group to begin drafting a new standard, *Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials: Single-Item Manuscripts* (DCRM(MSS)). This standard will provide U.S. archivists with guidance not available in DACS for item-level descriptions of unpublished manuscript materials when that type of control is warranted. Additional information about this developing standard is available at http://www.rbms.info/committees/bibliographic_standards/dcrm/dcrmmss/dcrmmss.html. A wiki will be made publicly available when the editorial work on DCRM(MSS) is farther along. DACS WG members Lynn Holdzkom, Kate Bowers, and Bill Landis are participating in this effort. The following summary was provided by Lynn Holdzkom:

  The RBMS Manuscripts Working Group is charged with "develop[ing] rules or guidelines for item-level description and cataloging of modern (post-1600) manuscript material. These rules may be adapted from AMREMM, APPM, AACR2, and/or DACS and are to provide specific, technical instruction for preparing full MARC 21 descriptions. They are to be self-sufficient as far as possible, with reference to other codes (such as AACR2 for the formulation of headings) only as necessary." A wiki has been created to facilitate

communication and work on DCRM(MSS) rules and a basic structure that mimics *Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials (Books)* (DCRM(B)) has been logically set out. The Manuscripts Working Group also maintains a very active listserv and is making steady progress in handling both general and specific issues. The following excerpt from their recent meeting at ALA indicates that the concept of companion standards and cross-format compatibility are basic principles guiding the Group's work: "There was discussion of these rules serving as a bridging standard between the ISAD(G) framework of DACS and the ISBD framework of DCRM(B). The archival community envisions the creation of companion standards for form material that will provide more detailed instructions for processing, and hopes that our document will serve as such a companion standard."

- The DACS WG is also collaborating with the RBMS Bibliographic Standards Committee (BSC) appointed on a second format-specific standard, *Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials: Graphics* (DCRM(G)). This standard will provide U.S. archivists with guidance not available in DACS for item-level descriptions of graphic materials, including born-digital formats such as photographs. A working group has been appointed by the BSC to create an initial draft for review, and more information about their work is available on the group's wiki at http://dcrmg.pbwiki.com/FrontPage. DACS WG member Marcy Flynn is serving as a liaison to this effort.

- Andrea Leigh, a member of the DACS WG, has begun discussions with the Association of Recorded Sound Collections (ARSC), the Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA), and staff at the Library of Congress's Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division and American Folklife Center about a process for the development of a DACS-compatible companion standard(s) for the item-level description of unpublished audiovisual materials. See her reports on these conversations in the Appendix to this report.

All of these efforts, once developed, look very promising for use as companion standards with DACS for the description of items, in a variety of formats, in both single-level and multilevel outputs when that type of description is desired by a repository.

Development of DACS-Related Continuing Education Opportunities

The one-day DACS introductory workshop has now been offered approximately 25-30 times since it was first developed in 2005. It continues to be offered by the SAA Education Office when requested. The workshop is taught by Lynn Holdzkom, Bill Landis, and Kelcy Shepherd, and having an interchangeable group of instructors has given the Director of Education the flexibility to offer it whenever it is requested.

The two-day MARC According to DACS (MAD) workshop, also developed in 2005, continues to be offered when requested by the SAA Education Office. The co-instructors for this workshop are Lynn Holdzkom and Kathy Wisser.

During the past year, three additional DACS- based workshops have been developed and successfully offered by SAA. The first, Applying DACS to Single-Item Manuscript Cataloging, was developed and has been offered several times by Diane Ducharme and Karen Spicher. The development of this workshop was instigated by requests for something like it during offerings of the DACS introduction and MAD workshops. Diane Ducharme is a member of the previously

mentioned RBMS Manuscripts Working Group and rules from DCRM(MSS) will be incorporated into this workshop as it develops. Lynn Holdzkom and Bill Landis provided support and feedback to the workshop developers.

This past spring, Bill Landis and Bradley Westbrook developed and offered, under the auspices of the SAA Education Office, the hands-on, two-day workshop Implementing DACS in an Integrated Content Management System (CMS): Using the Archivists' Toolkit. In order to increase the SAA Education Director's flexibility in scheduling this workshop, a pool of five instructors has been trained for this workshop: Bill Landis, Rachel Onuf, Sibyl Roud, Kelcy Shepherd, and Bradley Westbrook. The format of the workshop, after discussions with SAA leadership, was created so that the DACS component could be readily replicated with other open-source CMS. Chris Prom and Scott Schwartz will be teaching a version of the workshop based on Archon in late September.

DACS WG Activities for 2008-2009

- Complete development of and publicize the DACS information page.
- Coordinate creation of additional content for the DACS information page as need for it is identified by the DACS community.
- Coordinate development of additional DACS-related workshops as needed.
- Conduct 2009 public review of DACS and determine what, if any, changes to the standard are needed.

DACS WG Activities at the SAA Annual Meeting

The DACS WG will meet on Tuesday, 26 August 2007, 9:30-10:30 AM, in San Francisco as part of the meeting of the Standards Committee at the 72nd SAA Annual Meeting. Members of the DACS WG will be available for drop-in consultation and discussion during office hours from 5:30-7:30 PM on Thursday, 28 August 2008 in the Exhibit Hall during the grand opening/happy hour event.

Appendix: Reports by DACS WG member Andrea Leigh on two meetings with audiovisual format specialists regarding development of a companion standard for DACS for these formats

ARSC subcommittee on implementing DACS for unpublished sound recordings
Summary of a meeting with Andrea Leigh, June 2, 2008
Location: NAVCC, Culpeper, VA.

Present: Andrea Leigh, UCLA Film & Television Archive; Marsha Maguire, Motion Picture, Broadcasting & Recorded Sound Division, Library of Congress; Cathy Kerst and Maggie Kruesi, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress (joined in via telephone 45 minutes into the meeting)

Background: Andrea Leigh is a member of the Society of American Archivists' DACS Working Group and also an archivist and metadata librarian at the UCLA Film & Television Archive. The DACS Working Group is charged with developing a plan and timeline for carrying out a formal review of DACS on a five year cycle beginning in 2009. Andrea has been charged with following up with both the Moving Image and Recorded Sound communities for their recommendations on improving DACS to better accommodate these format specializations. She would like to form a task force similar to the ARSC (Association of Recorded Sound Collections) subcommittee on DACS through AMIA (the Association of Moving Image Archivists) and ideally would like to coordinate activities to see where there are commonalities and differences.

Andrea and Marsha discussed the lack of guidelines for describing archival moving image and recorded sound materials. For guidance on describing particular media, DACS (*Describing Archives: A Content Standard*, Society of American Archivists, 2004) recommends the use of existing media-specific standards; however, those standards (such as AACR2 chapter 6 for sound recordings and AACR2 chapter 7 and AMIM2 for moving image materials) do not adequately address the special characteristics of unpublished/archival media. They provide little help, for example, on how to formulate titles for films, videos, and sound recordings on which various kinds of events and other content have been captured, and they lack adequate guidance on the formulation of titles for unpublished materials associated with a particular work. Also, these media specific standards usually conflict with DACS in areas such as abbreviation and the use of square brackets. DACS lists the *IASA Cataloguing Rules* (Stockholm: International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives, 1999) as the companion standard for sound recordings. However, Maggie commented that the IASA cataloging rules are not adequate for ethnographic sound recordings, particularly the IASA rules for the title element.

The emerging RDA standard may be more in line with DACS in some areas, such as omitting the use of square brackets, minimizing abbreviation, and allowing the use of family names as creators. RDA does not appear to solve many of the larger issues, however. The FRBR concepts of work, expression, manifestation, and item are not generally applicable to unpublished materials, since these materials either cannot stand on their own or are representative of activities that generate the creation of a particular work.

RDA and DACS are also oriented around the concept of creators or authors who have chief responsibility either in the creation of the work or in the assembly, creation, or use of the materials being described, which is problematic for describing particular events, such as projects and productions that are not attributed to a single creator and identified chiefly by title.

The problems and challenges of working with archival materials in institutional environments in which library standards have always been followed are very similar in both the moving image and the recorded sound communities (at least, as reflected in our experiences). Educating librarians about the special nature of archival materials, and about archival principles and methods in general, may be the first – and in some ways the most challenging -- task in implementing an archival approach to arranging and describing archival moving images and sound recordings.

Another basic issue to address in guidelines for applying DACS to both moving image and recorded sound materials concerns the question of what is and what is not published. How to maintain *respect des fonds* while also providing useful information to item-oriented motion picture and recorded sound researchers who may not even be interested in the organic nature of an archival collection is also a large question. Basic archival terms for types of archival collections pose difficulties, too: Is it appropriate, or can it even be misleading, to refer to aggregations of media or multi-format materials created or accumulated by a person or organization as "papers" or "records"? The latter is especially problematic for collections of the "records" of record companies (following DACS to the letter could result in titles such as "Columbia Records records"). In DACS the word "collection" used in a title refers to an intentionally assembled collection, but media archivists may need to use "collection" to apply both to intentionally assembled *and* organically created/accumulated aggregations of material to avoid confusion.

Several issues specific to moving image and recorded sound materials that ARSC and AMIA task forces in this area will also need to address include:
- Split format collections
- Multiple generations of the same general content (and which copy/original should be described)
- The need to provide descriptions of items and even parts of items (e.g., segments of digital video and audio recordings) that can stand on their own: Item-level description is often needed, the archival principle of inheritance of information from the broad to the narrow and the undesirability of repeating information recorded at higher levels of description (DACS Principle 7.3) may be inappropriate for these media. *Note*: The American Folklife Center does not usually describe sound and video recordings at the item level in finding aids because at the item level, other tools (databases, recording logs) are available.
- Extent: DACS provides guidelines for the quantity and physical nature of the materials being described presupposing that users will want to select from different format types (film reels, audiocassettes), but this general statement of extent lacks guidelines for appropriate methods for noting base, generation, gauge, and technical specifications. Is it sufficient, then, to follow AMIM2 rules for collection level cataloging that direct catalogers to reference physical description in the scope and content note? Or should moving image catalogers reference AACR2/AMIM2 rules for physical description? Should recorded sound archivists reference AACR2 rules for physical description, particularly when abbreviations differ from DACS?
- Notes needed for describing media materials, such as formatted contents notes, physical description notes, inscription and markings notes, source notes, preservation notes, condition notes, etc.
- Dates: how to record the many different types of dates that can be associated with a single media item, e.g. broadcast, theatrical, creation, event, copyright, reproduction, and digital copy dates?
- When using DACS in conjunction with other standards such as AACR2 or AMIM2 or *Graphic Materials*, MARC 040 $e allows for one content standard to be recorded; what general guideline should be in place for determining which content standard is referenced? How many content standards are too many before it is considered not using a content standard at all?
- Ways to record variant titles for unpublished materials associated with a completed work, such as what is on a label as opposed to what is on an inventory list, as opposed to what is on a leader and what is on the actual item and then connecting those title variants to the completed work?

The meeting ended with the suggestion that we look at the American Folklife Center's online California Folk Music Collection http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/afccchtml/cowhome.html.

DACS for Moving Images
Meeting with Andra Darlington, Getty Research Institute and Andrea Leigh, UCLA Film & Television Archive
August 15, 2008
(meeting minutes by Andrea Leigh)

Andra's experience using DACS has been primarily to catalog collections of video art and mixed materials, most notably the Long Beach Museum of Art Video Archive acquired by the Getty Research Institute in December 2005 (a collection of almost 5,000 tapes including video art, taped interviews with artists, collectors, and curators, documentation of performances and other art events in Southern California, and associated papers). DACS is used for creating finding aids, collection-level MARC records, series- and other group-level records (e.g. productions elements and exhibition tapes), and records for mixed material works (e.g. installations that include a video artwork

and equipment). DACS is supplemented by AMIM2 and other companion standards, particularly in the creation of physical descriptions.

Problem areas identified in DACS for artists' works:

- <u>Dates</u>. There are a number of dates associated with an artist's work, e.g. creation, exhibition, release, broadcast, copyright, etc. Since artist's video works tend to lack a formal means of distribution (for instance, they may be acquired from a vendor such as Video Bank), it is not always clear what date(s) should be recorded and how. Referring to companion standards such as AMIM2 does not help, since AMIM2 is oriented around the concept of "distribution, release, broadcast" dates that are more indicative of commercially released motion pictures and television programs.

- <u>Titles.</u> A number of titles may be associated with an artist's work, particularly as the work evolves and exists in a number of versions.

- <u>Series</u>. The term "series" is problematic for moving images in general as it has a strong association with a television series, which is not the same as an artist's series, particularly one that lasts over a number of years, or a series in the context of archival arrangement and description.

- <u>Multiple provenance/split collections</u>. This is a common occurrence for moving image collections, where formats are split among repositories, or for the sake of intellectual control, records are split to highlight a particular series within a collection. Multiple provenance is also not uncommon for moving image collections; UCLA Film & Television Archive has multiple provenance associated with its Outfest Legacy Project. The LBMA Video Archive will be described with one EAD finding aid complemented by one collection-level MARC record, five series-level records, and thousands of analytic records for single items and groups of tapes.

- <u>Identifying creators</u>. A single artist can generally be identified with the creation of a single video, but this is not always obvious if a work is part of a series that may be the creation of a number of artists. When to choose title alone and when to identify a work by creator?

Overall, it would be useful if a "best practices" document could come out of the AMIA community to provide a set of guidelines for when to use DACS for collections of moving image materials in conjunction with AMIM2 as a companion standard. To begin this process, it would be useful to delineate what is a DACS problem in terms of describing non-paper materials as opposed to what is an AMIM2 problem in the description of "unpublished" moving image materials since neither standard is optimal. AMIM2, for instance, is not designed to be used as a companion standard except as an extension of AACR2r, which is oriented around "published" materials. Another issue is that DACS is oriented around the concept of creating a finding aid that is then cataloged. It is not always necessary to create a separate finding aid for moving image materials since the orientation often is to describe an aggregate of elements that are associated with a particular version of a work.