Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
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Technical Subcommittee on Encoded Archival Standards: Records in Context (RiC)
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TS-EAS is seeking the support of SAA Standards and Council in responding to the ongoing release of Records in Contexts (Ric).

BACKGROUND

As outlined in its by-laws, TS-EAS, a subcommittee of the Standards Committee with members both from SAA and the international archival community, is responsible for the ongoing maintenance of several encoded archival standards including EAD and EAC-CPF, with work ongoing for EAF. With all standards maintenance and revision work, TS-EAS ensures the approach includes diverse voices and a space where everyone feels welcomed, valued, and respected, no matter who they are or where they come from. TS-EAS is also responsible for fostering the evolution of archival encoding standards on behalf of and in consultation with the global archival community and in close collaboration with the International Council on Archives (ICA) Experts Group on Archival Description (EGAD).

For the past several years, TS-EAS has had two representative members of EGAD on its roster, with the primary goal of fostering open communication during the development of Records in Context (RiC), the standard that the Expert Group on Archival Description (EGAD) is creating for the International Council on Archives (ICA) (https://www.ica.org/en/about-egad). RiC will ultimately replace ISAD-G, ISAAR-CPF, ISDIAH and ISDF, the current standards for describing archives, creators, records holders, activities, and functions. Throughout RiC's development period, TS-EAS has clearly communicated with both the EGAD representatives and with the broader archival community that with any standards revisions or new development, RiC would be considered, but that ultimately TS-EAS work would be based on the requirements of the Society of American Archivists' standards, which are currently based on ISAD-G, ISAAR-CPF, ISDIAH and ISDF. (https://www.loc.gov/ead/standards-statement.html).

With the release of RiC-CM during the ICA Congress in Abu Dhabi 9-13 October 2023, there has been increasing pressure from our EGAD representatives that TS-EAS update its public standards alignment statement to indicate that we expect to fully align with

RiC-CM once it is released. Considering that EAD and EAC-CPF are on their own revision cycles, we are uncomfortable with adopting a blanket endorsement of the new standard, without taking the time to weigh its implications on our related but distinct standards. We are asking for support from the SAA Council and the Standards Committee to endorse our updated *Statement on Standards Alignment* (please see **Discussion section** below), and to include the statement somewhere on the SAA website so that it is clear to the broader community how TS-EAS approaches its work.

DISCUSSION

Since 2012, the Expert Group on Archival Description (EGAD) has been developing a new standard, Records in Context (RiC) for the description of records, with the goal of ultimately replacing ISAD-G, ISAAR-CPF, ISDIAH and ISDF, the current standards for describing archives, creators, records holders, activities, and functions. RiC is foreseen to be divided into four parts:

- *Records in Context - Introduction to Archival Description (RiC-IAD)*. First introduced in 2016 with a revision in 2022, is a brief introduction to the principles and purpose of archival description and is the first part of the RiC standard.
- *Records in Context - Conceptual Model (RiC-CM)*. A high-level conceptual model that focuses on intellectually identifying and describing records, the agents that created, used, or are documented in them, and the activities pursued by the agents that the records both facilitate and document. Anticipated release is October 2023.
- *Records in Context - Ontology (RiC-O).* Will address specific implementation of RiC-CM formally expressed in the World Wide Web Consortium standard Web Ontology Language, OWL. Released in December 2023.
- *Records in Context - Application Guidelines (RiC-AG)*. When completed, it will provide practitioners and software developers with concrete guidance and examples to assist them in implementing RiC-CM and RiC-O in records management systems.

Following its by-laws, throughout this development TS-EAS has engaged with the members of EGAD in various ways including having members from EGAD participate in meetings and the work of the subcommittee. EGAD has also shared their information with the community during annual meetings to the whole of SAA.

During the revision of EAC-CPF 2.0, TS-EAS created a *Statement on Standards Alignment*, acknowledging the continuing development of RiC and our willingness to assess and adopt RiC standards where applicable. (https://www.loc.gov/ead/standards-statement.html) Adoptions of RiC standards were made in EAC-CPF which was released in version 2 in 2022, including the linking possibilities, the core of RiC have been taken into account and the same changes will be applied to EAD and EAF.

With the release of RiC-CM in 2023, there has been increasing pressure from our EGAD representatives that TS-EAS update its public standards alignment statement to indicate

that we expect to fully align with RiC once it is released. We disagree with this approach for several reasons:

1. The current revisions to the EAD standards are being undertaken by TS-EAS based on the requirements of the Society of American Archivists' standards maintenance schedule and policies and are not tied to ongoing development of standards by the ICA.
2. We are currently closing in on the end of the EAD revision cycle where a new version is expected during 2024 and at this time do not feel that it is the appropriate time to commit to a new standard without proper evaluation.
3. Beyond any revisions, we are committed to follow our by-laws which allows us the time to evaluate any new standards (RiC included) and see if they meet the needs of our community.
4. We are committed to ensuring that any maintenance and revision of standards include diverse voices and a space where everyone feels welcomed, valued, and respected, no matter who they are or where they come from. Alignment with RiC once released would not allow us to fulfill this commitment.

We propose the following revised *Statement on Standards Alignment*:

> The standards maintained by the Society of American Archivists' Technical Subcommittee on Encoded Archival Standards (TS-EAS) are XML-schemas based on models developed by the International Council on Archives (ICA). Encoded Archival Description (EAD) has its origin in the General International Standard Archival Description (ISAD(G)), while Encoded Archival Context for Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families (EAC-CPF) has its origin in the International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons and Families (ISAAR-CPF). The current revision to the EAD standard is currently being undertaken by TS-EAS based on the requirements of the Society of American Archivists' standards maintenance schedule and policies and are not tied to the recent release of Records in Context (RiC) and its different parts. For this reason, the upcoming release of the new version of EAD will continue to be based on ISAD(G) taking the published version of Records in Contexts (RiC) into account but not at this point fully aligned. The same standpoint that was made within the revision of EAC-CPF.
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> With the RiC Conceptual Model now finalized and approved by ICA we anticipate that future versions of the standards maintained by TS-EAS will take the RiC Conceptual Model into account to make sure the EAS standards can be used for expressing the RiC-CM and following the requirements of the Society of American Archivists' standards maintenance schedule and policies. Our revisions or maintenance to standards will also include diverse voices and a space where everyone feels welcomed, valued, and respected, no matter who they are or where they come from.

TS-EAS is keeping close connections to the ICA Experts Group on Archival Description as a related standards body.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

We are seeking Council's approval to take due procedure when evaluating and thoughtfully, conscientiously working towards aligning the standards that we steward with RiC. We intend to align when possible going forward but seek to underscore to our EGAD colleagues that we will take these guidelines into consideration during our standard revision cycle. During this process, we will continue our collaborative and inclusive approach in weighing their recommendations along with the use case and needs of the populations that we serve.

Accordingly, we recommend:
- That SAA Council endorse TS-EAS' draft *Statement on Standards Alignment*.
- That SAA publish the statement on their website.

Impact on Strategic Priorities:

Endorsement of the *Statement on Standards* aligns with Goal 3: Advancing the Field in the SAA Strategic plan. In addition, it aligns with the following specific goals areas:

- 3.1. Identify the need for new standards, guidelines, and best practices and lead or participate in their development.
- Facilitate effective communication with and among members.
- Foster an inclusive association and profession through educational and leadership opportunities.

Fiscal Impact:

There is no fiscal impact from the Statement on Standards Alignment.