

**Society of American Archivists  
Council Meeting  
February 17, 19, 2026  
Virtual**

**Standards Committee: Request for Council Approval of the  
Revised Encoded Archival Standards Suite**

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**BACKGROUND**

Since 2016, the Technical Subcommittee for Encoded Archival Standards (TS-EAS) has been responsible for maintenance of the standards *Encoded Archival Description* (EAD) and *Encoded Archival Context-Corporate bodies, Persons, Families* (EAC-CPF), as well as development of a new standard for describing the functions and activities that result in archival records (hereafter abbreviated as functions).

EAD was first released in 1998 and received major updates in 2002 and 2015. EAC-CPF was released in 2010 and received a major update in 2022. There have been numerous small updates to these two standards since their most recent major updates.

Probably the most widely used international archival standard, EAD is an XML metadata transmission standard for descriptions of archival records. EAC-CPF, which is also widely used, is an XML metadata transmission standard for descriptions of archival agents. It is based on the *International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons and Families* (ISAAR-CPF), which is the content standard created by the International Council on Archives (ICA).

There is currently no XML metadata transmission standard for description of archival functions to express the ICA's *International Standard for Describing Functions* (ISDF) content standard. To fill this gap, TS-EAS has developed *Encoded Archival Context-Functions* (EAC-F).

In October 2025, TS-EAS submitted a combined submission packet for all three standards to the Standards Committee. After feedback, an updated version was submitted and approved by the Standards Committee at its December 2025 meeting.

## DISCUSSION

For brevity, only a broad outline of the changes and the revision process for this complex suite of interrelated standards is given here. For more details, see the TS-EAS narrative,<sup>1</sup> appendices,<sup>2</sup> and the full text of each standard.<sup>3</sup>

### *Implementation of Alignment by Design*

EAD and EAC-CPF have previously functioned as separate standards with independent revision cycles and the new EAC-F would then introduce a third independent cycle. This means that any changes to any of the standards inevitably puts the standards out of step, creating a “misalignment by design.” This misalignment impacts compatibility and interoperability, making it more difficult for systems to communicate and to exchange and process data. It also hinders a universal understanding of these standards across the user community, limiting their widespread adoption by cultural heritage professionals across different domains regardless of national contexts.

To address this, TS-EAS has introduced “alignment by design” in this suite. This includes an alignment of the three standards, with the goal of sharing one revision cycle and establishing a common base of shared elements and attributes to facilitate easier reuse and recognition by a variety of stakeholders, including cultural heritage professionals, software developers, and educators.

### *Key Changes to Support Alignment*

- Consolidating detailed function descriptions into the new EAC-F standard while updating EAC-CPF and EAD elements to reference those descriptions more clearly and consistently.
- Introducing shared, modular elements and attributes with a redesigned, centralized Tag Library model to improve data reuse and easier maintenance.
- Adopting clear, camelCase naming across all standards to reduce confusion, improve readability, and support global usability.
- Standardizing the use of the <relation> element across all standards, enabling consistent and compliant linking creators and related materials within descriptive elements.
- Streamlining and aligning the EAS XML-schemas by centralizing element and attribute definitions, automating schema generation, and using shared Schematron rules—managed transparently through GitHub—to ensure consistency, traceability, and easier maintenance across all standards.
- Advancing alignment with Records in Contexts (RiC) by enabling linked-open-data vocabularies, expanding entity types, introducing instantiation concepts, and updating value lists—while recognizing that full integration with RiC will require a future, dedicated revision.

<sup>1</sup> [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1T\\_nRTknYee1OIWZr7nQ-EFUzawqITT8T/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1T_nRTknYee1OIWZr7nQ-EFUzawqITT8T/view?usp=drive_link)

<sup>2</sup> [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/19dp-uR\\_gmBZUoYNjF4xUZOXbWc4WCC43?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/19dp-uR_gmBZUoYNjF4xUZOXbWc4WCC43?usp=drive_link)

<sup>3</sup> [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1lb3eQd8wFaa3JpZl5sxuGqJ9x\\_tq1X1b?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1lb3eQd8wFaa3JpZl5sxuGqJ9x_tq1X1b?usp=drive_link)

- Using existing EAS elements—especially <conventionDeclaration> and <maintenanceEvent>—to document AI use, decision-making, bias considerations, and accessibility practices, with further guidance to be provided in institutional best-practice documentation rather than through new schema elements.

### *Revision Process*

TS-EAS has been working on the revisions to EAD and the creation of EAC-F since 2021, with the revisions to EAC-CPF coming out of the standards alignment decisions described above. The consultation process has been extensive, including multiple calls for comment on EAD and EAC-F, creation of numerous webinars, and authoring of a four-part series on the Description Section's blog *Descriptive Notes*.

Substantial feedback was received on the EAD calls for comment, resulting in the creation of 156 issues in GitHub that the team subsequently addressed. Only 8 responses were received in the EAC-F call, which is reflective of the much smaller group of institutions interested in encoding functions at this time, rather than a failure of TS-EAS to engage appropriately with the community. The introduction of a practical way of encoding functions will go a long way towards increasing interest in functions in the international archival community.

### *Maintenance and Review Plan*

TS-EAS has a well-established process for addressing proposed changes to the standards under their purview in a timely manner. This is aided by EAD and EAC-CPF being approved for ongoing review. The Standards Committee recommends that EAC-F also be approved for ongoing review.

## **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

That the SAA Council approve the Encoded Archival Standards suite, consisting of:

- *Encoded Archival Description* (EAD) 4.0.0
- *Encoded Archival Context-Corporate bodies, Persons, Families* (EAC-CPF) 3.0.0
- *Encoded Archival Context-Functions* (EAC-F) 1.0.0

That the SAA Council approves the Encoded Archival Standards suite for ongoing review.

### **Support Statement:**

Approval of the revised Encoded Archival Standards suite will increase the capability of these standards in a sustainable way and introduce the ability to encode functions for the first time.

### **Impact on Strategic Priorities:**

SAA Council's approval is consistent with Strategic Priorities 2.2 and 3.1:

- 2.2 Provide content, via education and publications, that reflects the latest thinking and best practices in the field.

- 3.1. Identify the need for new standards, guidelines, and best practices and lead or participate in their development.

**Fiscal Impact:** None