Adam in the Archive: Discovering Named Entities in the Cold War Papers

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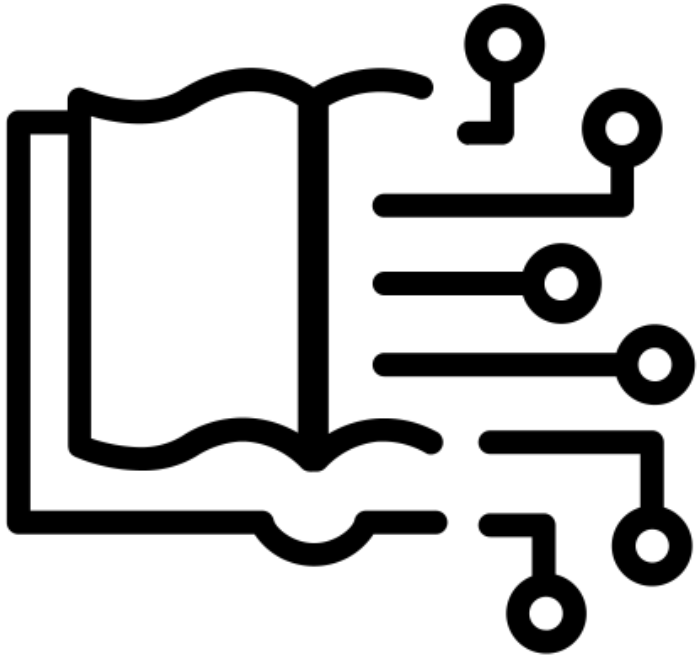
Background and Motivation

- NHPRC digitization grant, 2013 - 2015
- 350,000 pages of most typewritten documents now OCR'd
- Began with the correspondence series in the Kennan papers.



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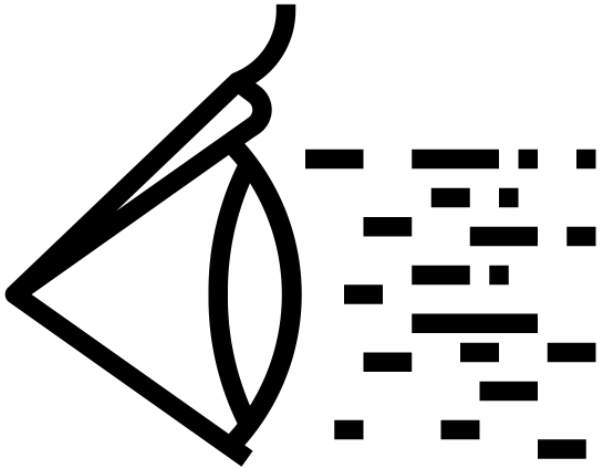
Background and Motivation



- Team wanted to determine:
  - Could using NER and dirty OCR produce useful information?
  - Can the use of automation conform with minimal processing approaches?
  - Can NER and OCR reveal named entities that are obscured by current description, especially individuals from marginalized communities?

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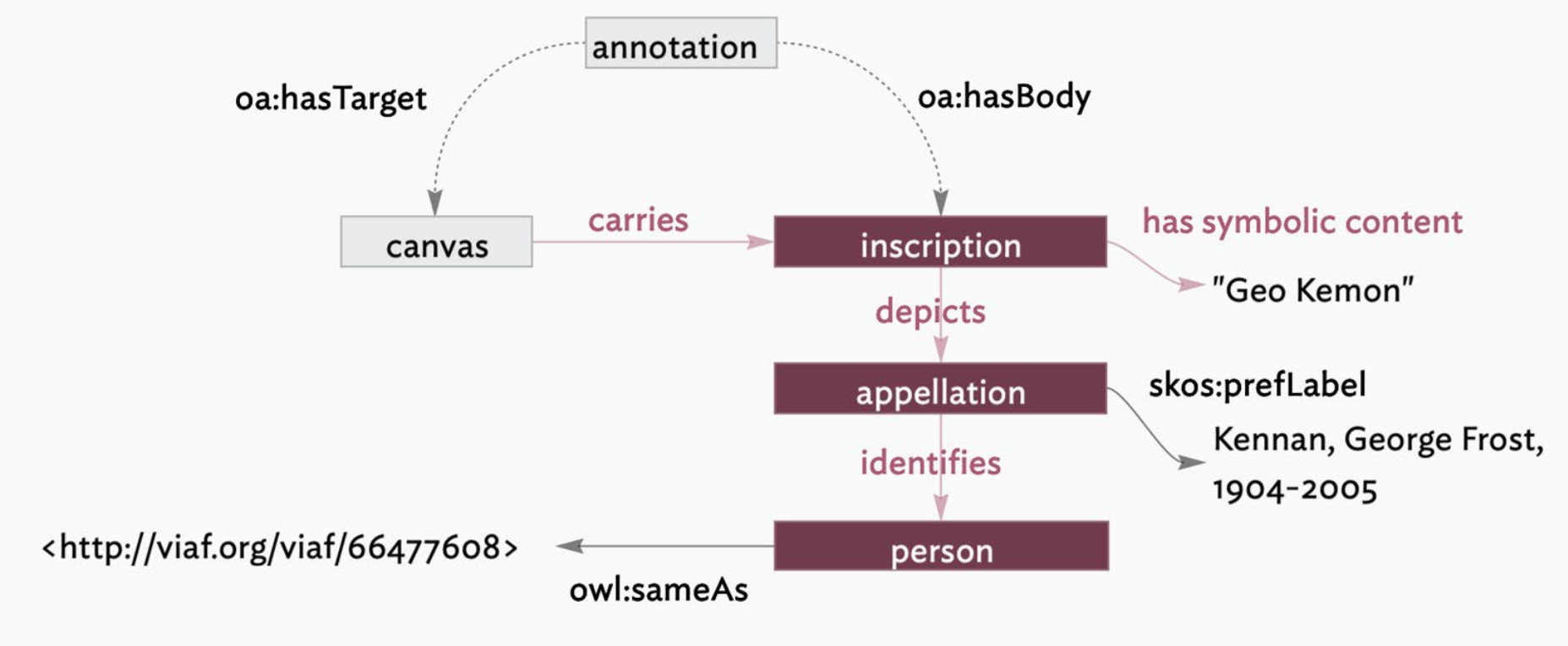
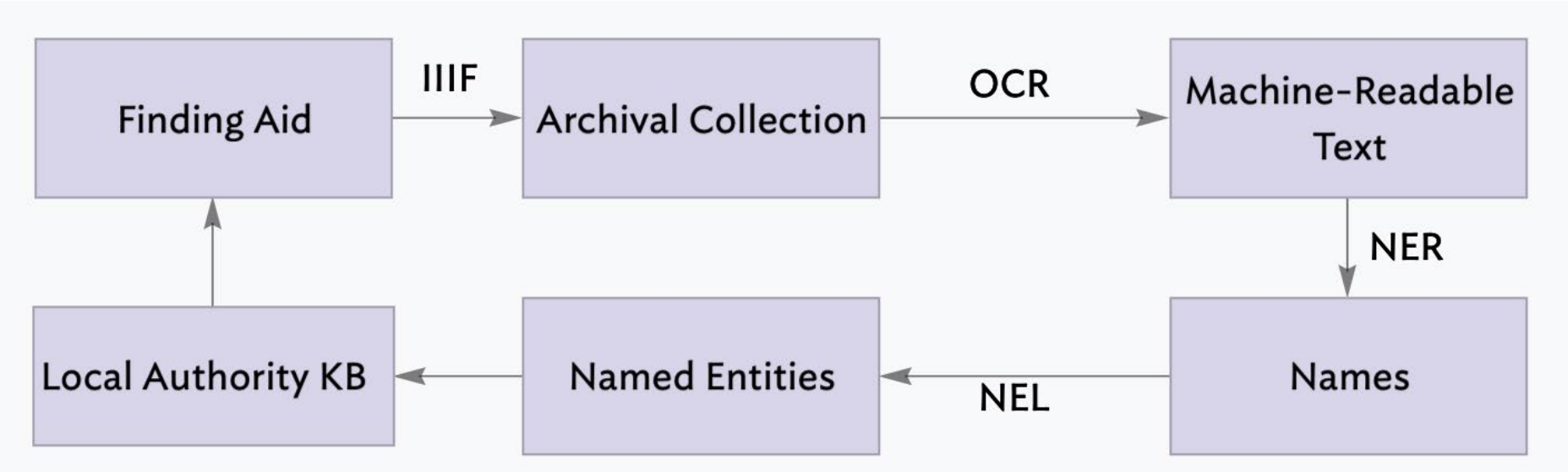
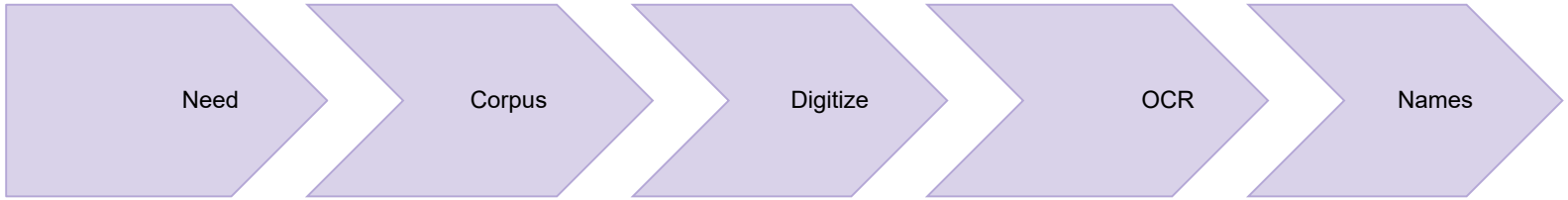
Semantic Model



Technical Workflow



Workflow



Discoveries

- Process finds names obscured by description that can be used to enhance the finding aid.
- People uncovered by NER usually not from marginalized communities.
- Dirty OCR results in a lot of incomplete names that require human review.
- Depending on how tightly focused a collection is, there may be a lot of “noise,” i.e. people who are not pertinent to the topics covered in the collection.

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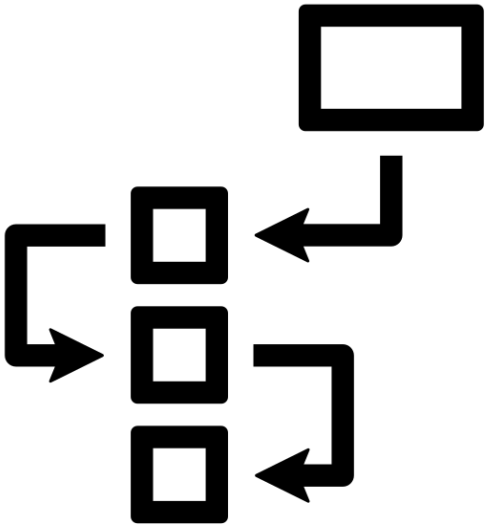
Next Steps



- Determine next corpus of documents to perform NER on.
- Assess whether different types of records and collections provide different or similar results.
- Enhance finding aids with names by creating Agent Records in ArchivesSpace, attaching to components within finding aids.

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Thank You!

Project Github:

https://github.com/pulibrary/finding_aid_enrichment