



WHEN ARCHIVES HAVE ARTIFACTS:

250+ OBJECTS/100+ YEARS OF AP HISTORY
DESCRIBE THAT!

SARIT S. HAND, DIGITAL ARCHIVIST
FRANCESCA PITARO, ARCHIVIST
ASSOCIATED PRESS CORPORATE ARCHIVES

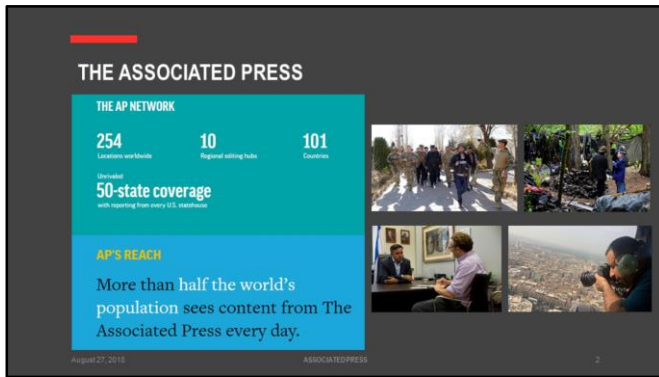
August 27, 2018

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Thank you Martha – It's very nice to be here to day to discuss our project.



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I'll begin with some background information for those of you who are not familiar with the AP.

The Associated Press was founded in New York City in 1846 as a cooperative with American newspapers as its owners and members. The AP still operates as an independent cooperative. Our staff is more than two-thirds journalists and on any given day, more than half the world's population sees news from the AP.



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The Corporate Archives was established in 2003 to document the news, administrative and governance arms of the AP from its beginnings in 1846 to the present.

The AP also has a photo archive, a video archive and a text archive which are operated separately from the Corporate archives.

We currently have

- 4,000 linear feet of paper records including governance records, bureau records, wire copy, personal papers, internal publications, oral histories and photographs
- Terabytes of digital collections
- A reference library

AND----- the subject of our presentation

- More than 250 artifacts

In 2015 we learned that the AP would be moving to new offices in early 2017. With a staff of three, we obviously had a lot to do. Among the projects we prioritized was the artifacts collection.

This image shows the archives room at our new location in lower Manhattan with our stacks and reference library. The teletypes are stored in our IT department.



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The artifacts consists of tools of the news trade such as, cameras and photo equipment, typewriters, teletype machines, press badges, computers, uniforms, AP branded gifts and memorabilia and much more.

Over the years, these items had come to the archives as bureaus moved, employees retired, or as equipment was replaced by newer technology.

Some of the artifacts were used as office décor in the years before the AP even had an archives and after when it moved from Rockefeller Center to 33rd Street.

There had been no formal methodology for keeping track of these items until the Corporate Archives was created.

When we conducted our survey in preparation for this latest move, some of the issues we noted was that:

Most items were not listed in the AP19 resource record in our current cataloging system, ArchivesSpace even though they may have an accession record.

Once the corporate archives was well established, the most common method of identification was by accession number and attaching a tag as shown in the top right picture of an AP Photo bib or printed on labels placed on the outside of a box the object was in, as shown in the lower right image.

And we had a couple of legacy listings not kept up to date, paper records of donations and in some cases loan agreements from previous events identifying some of the artifacts.



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As mentioned, Artifacts were scattered throughout the offices on display with the bulk of the artifacts packed on shelves in the stacks, without an individual item location listing. They were not stored in any particular order and while some items were placed in boxes, not all of which were archival, others were simply placed on the shelves. With the eminent move on the horizon we needed to be able to account for each item and figure out how to transport them and keep track of them.

We had our project:

Our initial goal was to gain physical control of the collection through an item-level inventory and box everything for the move.

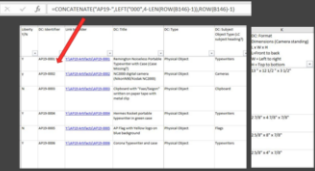
As we fleshed out the scope of the project, it expanded. We took advantage of the opportunity to do a little more with the inventory process.

After all, if we were going to go through every item anyway, we might as well get as much descriptive information as we can.

We also figured, rather than randomly placing items into boxes just to move, we should properly house and label everything to improve future access.

THIS IS WHERE WE STARTED

- Unique identifier not just a title to facilitate the inventory
- Title
- Dimensions
- Date
- Subject heading (LC and Local)
- Description
- Accession Numbers



BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE...

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I am sure many of us here are VERY familiar with using spreadsheets for creating listings.

Excel was our go to for inventorying the artifacts.

We wanted a series of standard fields to use to describe any type of object we came across.

Keeping it simple we kickstarted the project using Simple Dublin Core elements as our very basic level for description.

As the scope of the project expanded to include more information we broke out the details into more fields. Using a handful of artifacts to pilot our schema, we created our workflow.

One of the first things we tackled was the unique identifier. The ID began with AP19, the record group number, followed by a hyphen then a four digit number starting with 0001 and simply went in numerical order as we described each item. So long as each item had a unique ID, it didn't matter what order we entered them into. In order to insure we wouldn't end up with duplicate numbers through human error, we used a formula in the ID column to automatically fill with the next number in the sequence, which you can see in the above image.

Then we focused on key elements and worked out rationales to make sure we consistently used them each time. For example:

Title: we attempted to keep each title as brief as possible, just enough to tell us what it was. For example Nikon 35mm Camera with leather carrying case.

We added in dimensions, in part because we needed to figure out the extent of the collection to be able to report our facility needs in the new office. But it later became the tool for selecting the appropriate storage box to house each item.

Date was used to identify the approximate period of time the artifact was "in use" at the AP.

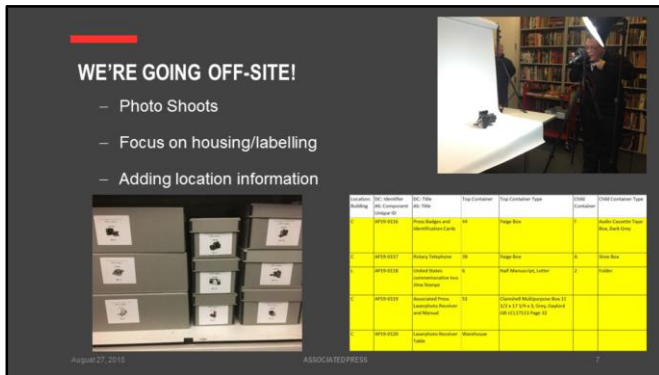
For Subject, we used LC authorities listing to categorize each item, like camera, or typewriter and created additional subject fields using local subject headings for AP specific keywords, such as a bureau name or department the item was associated with.

The Description, described the item in more detail about the color, condition, accessories if any, its use or other details we had about it that was unique enough to distinguish it from perhaps a similar looking item.

We also included the accession ID when known using all of the records, I described previously.

We got underway way. One of us handle the object: describing and measuring it and the other person entered in the data into the spreadsheet. Taking turns with the roles, we soon found our groove and started to make rapid progress.

But, we were thrown a curve ball...



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The move took on new dimensions when we discovered that the bulk of the collection would be housed off-site.

No longer was it just a matter of getting the artifacts moved, we needed to compensate for not having direct physical access to artifacts as we had had all this time.

We decided to use the skills of our photographers and began to the process of photographing every single artifact we catalogued. This would allow us to provide visible, if not physical, access to everything. Each image file was given the respective UID of the artifact and an image sequence number and sorted into folders with matching UID numbers.

Labels were created using the mail merge function in WORD. And included the UID as well as the image of the item for quick reference,

Now, we wanted to be able to physically locate the box containing the artifact when we needed to. Each box was given a number and the number of the box was recorded in the listing.

We could now identify immediately which box the item was in.

All that was left was to add the location once everything was moved.

In 2017, the AP moved its headquarters and the archival collections were moved to their two separate locations.

After the dust settled, the location for each box was added.

The location became a unique address or ID, it included: A single letter to represent one or the other site, the room, row, bay and shelf number.

Finally, our spreadsheet was complete.

Stage 1 was essentially done.

We successfully moved and kept track of everything!

And now Francesca will tell you about the next stage.

TAKING THE NEXT STEP: FROM SPREADSHEET TO ARCHIVESPACE

- Clean up the data
- Align the Dublin Core elements to ASpace fields
- Enter data into ASpace
- Who has the time?

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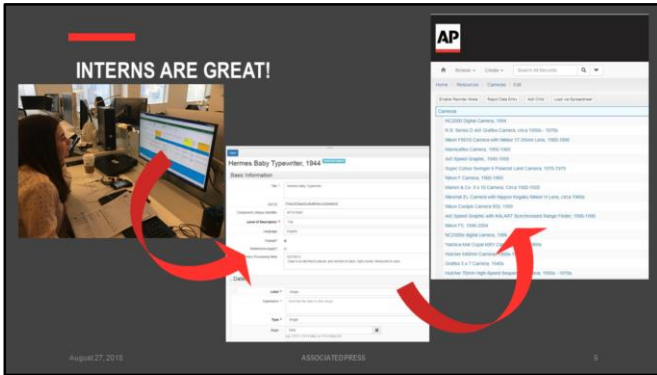
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The spreadsheet was really key for the inventory and for being able to track our collection for the move. It also gave us a way to search the collection, but it was difficult to share with the rest of the staff. Also, our aim is to have a single catalog with at least baseline information about all of our collections in one place. For us that meant getting our records into archivesSpace. We recently implemented the ArchivesSpace public interface making information about our collections available to AP staffers and we felt that it was important to have information about the artifacts available directly to the staff.

Before that could happen we would need to clean up the data, align the Dublin core elements to ArchivesSpace fields and enter the data into archivesspace.

But we needed staff --Sarit and I were already stretched pretty thin



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 We were very fortunate to find an intern who was in in her final semester of her master's program in information management. Working on the spreadsheet we began by standardizing language and terminology. Teletype or teletype machine? Badges or IDs? Is that jack box telecommunications equipment or teletype equipment? I think you get the picture.

There was also a fair amount of clean up to be done on dates. It often required research to determine an accurate creation date. When we didn't have a creation date, we tried to determine usage dates. And there was the usual clean up of spelling, grammar and punctuation. Fortunately we had the e had the AP Stylebook to help us.

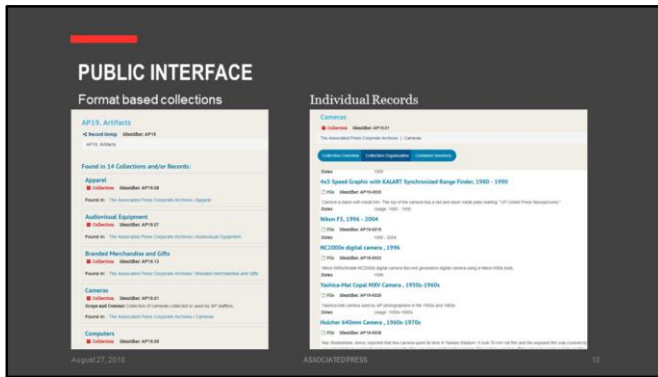
Using Office 365 to share the spreadsheet made things much simpler. We didn't' have to keep exchanging different versions of the spreadsheet.

Once we were satisfied with the basic cleanup, we used the subject headings from our spreadsheet to create 14 Format-based collections--- cameras, typewriters, etc. in archivesspace. Most of these were based on LC headings but we also created some local headings.

We then decided how to align the Dublin core elements from the spreadsheet with the fields in archivesspace. For example we decided to enter the object dimensions in the note field rather than in the extent field. We put the item description in the scope and content. It was a process. Most of our decisions were aligned with our usual protocols for ArchivesSpace but one change we made from usual practice was to attach subject headings at the archival object level, rather than only at the collection level record, to facilitate faceted searching. . We tried to document our decisions and we hope to create a more formal manual at some point.

You can see the archival object screen on the left for the Hermes Baby Typewriter, and the resource record screen for our collection of cameras on the right

Once the data was entered in Archives Space we went through a final round of editing



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This is a view of the ArchivesSpace Public interface where you can see a partial list of our artifacts collections under AP19, our record group for artifacts. and then an individual resource record for cameras....You can't see all the notes attached to each item in this view, but you can see that each item has its unique id – Taking us back to the beginning to one of the first steps of our project.



WHERE WE STAND

- Complete inventory
- Discoverable through ArchivesSpace
- Accessible visually and physically

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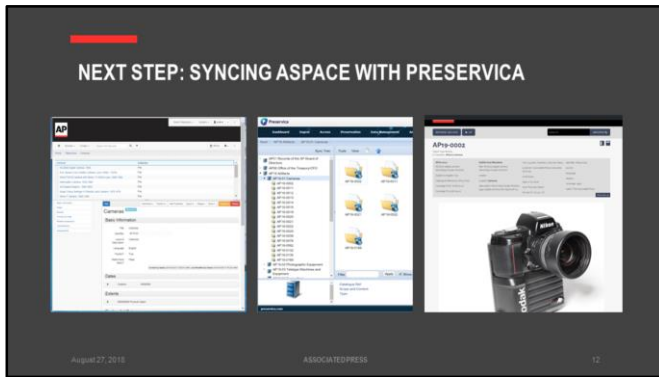
We've accomplished most of what we set out to do

WE have our Inventory

We have our ArchiveSpace Records

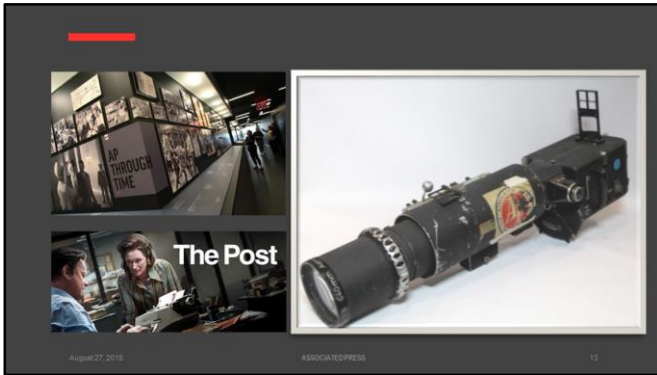
We have our photos and locations,

BUT..... We also have plans for the future – and I'll turn it over to Sarit again



The new office space did not provide an exhibition area to display our holdings. However, with two digital platforms could provide virtual access to our artifacts. As Francesca discussed, the description information is now in ArchivesSpace. But we have all of these awesome images!

Thus we begin stage 3, which will hopefully be our final stage. Using our digital preservation system, Preservica, we are testing ingesting the images for long term preservation. We anticipate syncing ArchivesSpace and Preservica in the near future which will enable us and our staffers to search our catalogue, seen in the image on the left. The images reside in Preservica, as seen in the image in the center. A link in ArchivesSpace will open the images in the access module of Preservica shown on the right and the researcher can view the artifacts. With ArchivesSpace accessible to all AP staffers, more people have the ability to see what we have making everything more accessible.



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Some examples:

In the upper left image you can see images decorate the halls of our 18th floor permanent exhibit in the new offices which include not only the artifacts but also scanned images of a variety of items from the Corporate Archives, along side news photography.

7 of our teletypes hit the red carpet in 2017, in the movie, The Post, featuring Tom Hanks and Meryl Streep.

And there is a looping slideshow playing on a monitor in a highly visible area, where people frequently stop by to watch, comment and in some cases, contribute more information about one or more of the items.

We are also able to show you and other our holdings using part of that same slideshow, clearly something much more portable than 250 plus artifacts.

Staffers will be able to discover what we have, think of new ways to use the artifacts and it also enables us to bring more attention to our holdings.



Thank you for listening to our presentation.