

## **At a Crossroads: Archival description, aggregation, and the next 20 years**

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**Abstract:** Archival description aggregations formed at the state and regional level over the last two decades in order to overcome barriers to creating structured, consistent, and interoperable archival description, and largely to implement Encoded Archival Description (EAD). Thanks to early investment by institutions, states, and funders, those involved made significant progress and spawned sixteen aggregators that are available to institutions in twenty-five states. However, these aggregators are now struggling to find sufficient resources to update their infrastructure, meet user needs for access to archival collections, and engage with some of the most promising advances in the field. We have an opportunity to address a major gap in our scholarly communication infrastructure by pursuing opportunities through large-scale collaboration.

With funding from the California State Library's LSTA program, the California Digital Library has convened a one-year collaborative planning initiative with other state and regional finding aid aggregators to explore possibilities for scaling and transforming aggregation to a national level. The planning initiative commenced with research conducted by AB Consulting to understand the current state of finding aid aggregation. This was followed by a summer planning symposium attended by project partners. The initiative will culminate this fall with a concrete action plan for next steps based on the shared needs, interests and available resources within the community of aggregators.

This presentation will discuss the research phase of the project, which included conducting in-depth surveys and interviews with finding aid aggregators, and will highlight findings--identifying trends in resources, perceived value, end user needs, and innovation.

### **About the Author:**

*Jodi Allison-Bunnell* (AB Consulting) is a consultant with twenty-three years of experience leading and participating in collaborations to increase access to unique content in archives, libraries, and museums by using shared systems and standards. For eleven years, she was the program manager for unique content at the Orbis Cascade Alliance, a consortium of thirty-eight academic libraries in Oregon and Washington. She is one of the founders of Northwest Digital Archives (now Archives West), the second-largest aggregation of finding aids in the U.S., along with a DPLA hub for Oregon and Washington. Prior to that, she held positions at the University of Montana and the University of Maryland at College Park. She holds an MA and MLS from the University of Maryland at College Park and a BA *summa cum laude* from Whitman College.