

MODULE 18

USING EAD3

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**SOCIETY OF
American
Archivists**

EAD Case Study: Archives Hub

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The Archives Hub aggregates thousands of archival descriptions from across the United Kingdom. Funded by Jisc (formerly the Joint Information Systems Committee), the Archives Hub started in 1999 as a pilot project designed to bring together archival descriptions from higher education archives but has since expanded to include institutions of all kinds. The Archives Hub uses EAD because it is an international standard and therefore supports data exchange, interoperability, and digital preservation. Archival descriptions encoded in EAD can be transformed into multiple outputs and searched in powerful ways. Currently, more than 280 archival institutions have contributed more than 26,000 top-level finding aids, representing more than 500,000 units, to the Hub.

In addition to aggregation, the Archives Hub provides a number of services to contributors, including training, documentation, guidelines, and recommendations for archival description and EAD encoding; data manipulation; and an EAD editor. Contributors to the Archives Hub create their own EAD in a variety of systems, including XML editors and archival management systems. Many use the EAD editor provided by the Hub that uses web forms for data input and converts content to EAD behind the scenes. In addition to being valid EAD, encoded finding aids must comply with requirements for “Hub EAD,” a set of mandatory elements. The Archives Hub’s guidelines also identify a set of preferred EAD elements that are recommended but not mandated.

The Cheshire 3 information retrieval system is currently used for search and delivery of EAD in the Archives Hub. The Hub uses Cheshire with an additional layer specifically designed for use with EAD. The Archives Hub also serves as the UK’s centralized provider of archival descriptions to other aggregators, such as Archives Portal Europe (APE). Initially accomplished by sharing zipped EAD files, ongoing contribution to APE will be done through a monthly harvest. The Hub provides troubleshooting and data consistency support for this partnership.

The Archives Hub is working with the company Knowledge Integration, which is providing a new system to be launched in August

2016. The new system will use Elasticsearch and will implement more flexible, modular software; use a more rigorous, machine-based approach to workflow; and will also offer an enhanced administrative interface for contributors. Enhancements to the workflow will include more validation built in to the EAD editor and multiple levels of validation on upload for files created outside of the EAD editor. In addition, the Archives Hub will provide interfaces for machine-based sharing and harvesting of data—the Elastic Search API and the Open Archives Initiative Protocol for Metadata Harvesting (OAI-PMH).

The new system will store the data in JavaScript Object Notation (JSON). Although data won't be natively stored in EAD, the EAD schema will continue to be the format used to move data into and out of the system. Once the new system is in place, the Archives Hub will begin considering when to move to EAD3.

The Archives Hub website (<https://archiveshub.ac.uk/>, captured at <https://perma.cc/KK4Q-G2RX>) is extensive. In addition to the Hub's user interface, the site provides documentation for researchers and archivists. Content for archivists includes information about contributing to the Hub; documentation for creating and enhancing EAD; instructions for the EAD editor; results of surveys of researchers and contributors; and organizational information, such as policies and planning documents.