MODULE 18

USING EAD3

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Appendix C: Case Studies

EAD Case Study: University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC)

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The Special Collections department in the Albin O. Kuhn Library at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC), began implementing EAD in 2015. The department's staff members were interested in EAD because they wanted to standardize their finding aids and improve their ability to share data. They had investigated EAD in 2008, but because they had relatively few finding aids and limited expertise for displaying and sharing XML at the time, they decided to revisit EAD implementation later.

In 2014, UMBC was awarded an NHPRC grant to create collection-level records for all of their archival collections and to produce EAD as part of their description workflow. Descriptions start in PastPerfect, a commercial collections and contact management system used by a number of departments at UMBC's library. At the point of accessioning, all collection-level data is entered into PastPerfect, with content guided by a DACS-compliant description manual. PastPerfect can export data in a format called PastPerfect-XML, which UMBC's archival staff members then process using a Saxon program and XSLT stylesheets to convert PastPerfect-XML to EAD and to MARCXML.

Once the initial EAD file is created, some hands-on cleanup and enhancement is done. PastPerfect exports subject headings and access points as one block of text. Individual headings are separated and encoded as <subject> elements during the XSLT conversion process, but these are then reviewed so that other types of headings can more specifically be encoded as <corpname>, <famname>, and so on. Data is also added to @source during this review. For processed collections, expanded information for some notes fields is added to the EAD. Container lists are created in Excel and then formatted using Word Mail Merge to produce XML. Cleanup and editing of the XML is done in EditiX, an XML editor. An open source tool called Kernow is used for batch validation of EAD files.

Finding aids are then shared on UMBC's website. Completed EAD files are converted to PHP using XSLT, and the PHP files are processed on the web server into HTML for display (for example, see http://library.umbc.edu/speccoll/findingaids/coll106.php, captured at https://perma.cc/3B4B-5578). A PDF is created from the web display

and linked from the PHP file to give researchers a cleaner option for printing, and archival staff also make the XML code for every finding aid available. PastPerfect and MARC records for each collection include links to the PHP/web display. Collections that are part of the Center for Biological Sciences Archives are also shared with the National Library of Medicine's History of Medicine Finding Aids Consortium (https://www.nlm.nih.gov/hmd/consortium/, captured at https://perma.cc/GPN3-3H3T).

UMBC's EAD workflow has involved the archivist, a catalog and metadata librarian, two graduate students from an MLS program, and an undergraduate information science student. During the grant, a graduate student has been responsible for running the EAD process, but the archivist will take over when the grant is finished.

UMBC staff overcame a few challenges during implementation, particularly relating to tools. PastPerfect exports XML, but the export includes all of the collection records within a single file. After testing a few options for separating those files, they built a small program in-house that uses Saxon for batch processing files. The tool is used not only to separate the collection descriptions but to process the XSLT for converting PastPerfectXML to EAD and the XSLT that converts EAD to PHP.

Implementing a delivery solution also required some problem solving. Staff members had planned to use CONTENTdm to deliver EAD online and make it searchable. This changed when they decided to move forward with EAD3, because EAD3 was very new at the time and most systems such as CONTENTdm could not yet accommodate it. As a result, UMBC decided to convert its finding aids for display on its own website as described above. Staff members also hoped to implement a system to provide stable URLs, which CONTENTdm would have provided. After evaluating several options, staff members determined that the amount of work involved was unfeasible. For now they are using consistently formatted URLs and are hoping that a consortial solution may be available in the future.

UMBC's finding aids site (http://library.umbc.edu/speccoll/findingaids/, captured at https://perma.cc/8XYQ-XC2S) includes display and XML versions of all finding aids; the project's grant proposal summary and workplan; description manual; a link to templates, XSLTs, and other files on GitHub; and additional information about UMBC's implementation.