

TRENDS IN
ARCHIVES
PRACTICE

MODULE 1

**STANDARDS
FOR ARCHIVAL
DESCRIPTION**

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SOCIETY OF
**American
Archivists**

CHICAGO

What We Learned at ECU by Experimenting with EAC

by Mark Custer

East Carolina University's Joyner Library outsourced the encoding of their finding aids in 2001–2002 with the assistance of an NC ECHO LSTA¹⁰⁸ legacy finding aid grant. The result: just over 1,000 manuscript collections were encoded in EAD. Once in EAD, the collections were ready for the Web, but they were still waiting for EAC-CPF to help expose and untangle the richly interconnected web that was woven throughout their archival descriptions.

Fast-forward to 2011, and the number of EAD records managed by Joyner Library had increased to 1,846. At this time, the EAC-CPF standard had been officially released, and the Social Networks and Archival Context project (SNAC) had created an online EAC-driven prototype. Still, the majority of names in ECU's collections were not yet represented in the SNAC database. The stage was set, then, to experiment with creating our very own EAC-CPF records. What we learned in the process was invaluable.

Contained within our 1,846 EAD records were more than 6,000 encoded names (80 percent personal names) and 716 biographical or historical notes. Terry Sanford, for example, appeared in thirteen of the collections, with the following type of encoding being typical:

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<persname> Sanford, Terry (7) 1958, 1961</persname>
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Not only could we leverage this data to authorize the names, but we were able to “link” many of them with external services, such as OCLC's Virtual International Authority File (VIAF), with the help of Google Refine, as shown on the next page:

108 For additional information on the North Carolina Exploring Cultural Heritage Online (ECHO) Project, see <http://www.ncecho.org/grants/index.shtml>. For more information on Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Grants, see <http://statelibrary.ncdcr.gov/ld/grants/lsta.html>.

Match this Cell Match All Identical Cells Cancel

Terry Sanford

	<p>James Terry Sanford (August 20, 1917 – April 18, 1998) was a United States politician and educator from...</p> <p>more</p>	<p>Related Links</p>
<p>Date of birth: Aug 20, 1917</p>		<p> Wikipedia</p>
<p>Country of nationality: United States of America</p>		<p> NNDB</p>
<p>Profession: Politician</p>		<p> Congressional Biography</p>
<p>Source: Freebase CC-BY</p>		<p> Daylife Topic Page</p>
<p></p>		<p> Terry Sanford Videos</p>
		<p> Library of Congress Name Authority File (LCNAF)</p>
		<p> German Wikipedia</p>
		<p> Virtual International Authority File</p>
		<p> German Wikipedia</p>

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EAC-CPF Authority Data in OCLC VAIF

All told, the experiment resulted in 3,415 unique names. But its value will really shine through once these EAC-CPF records are shared and controlled by the entire archival community.