

# SOLO

Newsletter of the Solo Archivists Section, Society of American Archivists

## Spring 2024

### Letter from the Chair

Dear Solo Archivists Section Members,

Happy New Year! And happy Lunar New Year as well! Chinese New Year was always a fun time in my family, and I have fond childhood memories of the food and going to parades. The Year of the Dragon is the luckiest on the Chinese zodiac and is said to be a year of change, and a time to unleash creativity and pursue dreams with courage and confidence. I'd like to think that we as a section are starting this new year off fresh and reinvigorated with our new name.

I am very excited about the Steering Committee's two new initiatives that aim to better serve the membership. In the special issue of *SOLO*, the committee introduced you to the new Buddy List, which is a great way to connect with other solo archivists outside of the listserv or SAA Connect.

The program will help members who are seeking advice but are hesitant to post questions on the listserv due to the public-facing nature of the system. To join, please fill out the [SAA Solo Archivists Section: Buddy List 2023-2024 form](#). You can read more about the Buddy List in the [2023 Special Edition of SOLO](#).

The committee has also launched the "Essential Resources for Solo Archivists" collaborative database, which was compiled from recommendations shared on the SAS listserv. The Essential Resources database can be found at [https://bit.ly/solo\\_archivist\\_resources](https://bit.ly/solo_archivist_resources).

We would love your participation and input, no matter how large or small. I wish you all the very best in all of your endeavors this year!

Julie Yamashita  
Archivist  
Lanterman House  
[lantermanarchives@gmail.com](mailto:lantermanarchives@gmail.com)



### In This Issue

Letter from the Chair .....	1
Highlights .....	2
Updates .....	4
Encoding Finding Aids on a Budget .....	5
About SAS .....	7

## Highlights

Share what you've been up to with your fellow solo archivists!

**Name & Email**

Travis H. Williams (archives@stedwards.edu)

**Position title**

Archivist and Special Collections Librarian

**Institution**

St. Edward's University

**What kind of institution do you work at?**

University Library

**What's the most interesting thing in your collection?**

The medieval antiphonal gets a lot of attention!

**What's your major accomplishment in the last year?**

In January, Munday Library's Archives and Special Collections hosted Hillhops: A Celebration of Texas Beer History. The event included two panel discussions ("Brews in the Books" and "Black Leaders in Brewing"), opportunities to network with more than 40 Texas breweries and related-businesses, brewing-related historical exhibits from the SEU archives and private collectors, and entertainment provided by the Austin Polka Band. The event is designed to connect SEU students and faculty with the vibrant craft brewing industry of Texas and to highlight the Texas Craft Brewing Collections held by Munday Library. For more information visit [www.texasbeerarchive.org](http://www.texasbeerarchive.org)

Left: An overview of the Hillhops: A Celebration of Texas Beer History event. Right: A closeup of visitors enjoying a display. *Courtesy of Travis H. Williams.*



**Name & Email**

Hilary Swett (hswett@wgfoundation.org)

**Position title**

Archivist

**Institution**

Writer's Guild Foundation

**What kind of institution do you work at?**

Independent arts non-profit, affiliated with the WGA union

**What's the most interesting thing in your collection?**

It's impossible to pick one but I'll try. I have a small number of records from the WGA union which include correspondence and meeting minutes from the late 1940s and early 1950s when the Hollywood Blacklist was brewing and taking hold. These papers reveal the difficult questions facing the union in how it was going to address (or not) the fact that some members were being targeted for their political beliefs. They also show the human toll on everyone involved no matter where in the political spectrum they were—the individuals who were blacklisted; supporters of those who were; those who chose to stay silent; and those who favored HUAC's investigation into Communism's relationship to the motion picture industry. It was so complicated in every way and is an evergreen topic for scholars.

**What's your major accomplishment in the last year?**

The last 12 months had some nice outreach moments for us. Our library and archive got a short profile in the ALA magazine; I organized a book signing with a biographer; I loaned material for a local museum exhibition that increased our visibility and reach; I was able to casually ask a prominent writer to join our board and now it's likely happening; and when the WGA strike ended, I put out a call to members for donations of ephemera and they did not disappoint. All of these things only came to fruition because of the low-key advocacy and goodwill that I am constantly mindful of but not always good at. I remind myself that it pays off eventually, in big and small ways.



Top: WGA 2023 Strike buttons. Bottom: WGA 2023 bedazzled strike parasol. *Courtesy of Hilary Swett.*

## Updates

### Submitting Future Highlights to *SOLO*

If you would like to submit a highlight of your own for a future edition of *SOLO*, simply follow [this link](#) and fill out the Google Form! Highlights are an easy way to share news, accomplishments, and updates with your fellow Solo Archivists.

### Upcoming Events

The Solo Archivists Section has two exciting, upcoming events! In the coming weeks, the section will host two events as part of the UnBOXed series. Keep an eye on the section listserv for further information and registration links!

#### UnBOXed: Digitization Projects 1 ([Register Here!](#))

##### Presenters:

- Katie Banks ([Milligan University](#))
- Sidney Louie ([Palama Settlement](#))
- Karina Wilhelm ([Center for Archaeology and Society Repository, School of Human Evolution and Social Change, Arizona State University](#))

**Date:** March 28, 2024

2pm Eastern / 1pm Central / 12pm Mountain / 11am Pacific / 10am Alaska / 8am Hawai'i

#### UnBOXed: Digitization Projects 2 ([Register Here!](#))

##### Presenters:

- Akio Lis ([American Numismatic Association Library](#))
- Diamond Cronen ([MOS Family Archive / Maria Shriver Archive](#))

**Date:** April 26, 2024

2pm Eastern / 1pm Central / 12pm Mountain / 11am Pacific / 10am Alaska / 8am Hawai'i

Your Voice Matters

Both UnBOXed events will be panel discussions. Make sure to come with questions, recommendations, and stories of your own!

SOLO



# Encoding Finding Aids on a Budget: Using Atom and HTML to Put Findings Aids Online

By Katherine N. Banks, MLS | University Archivist & Information Resources Librarian,  
Milligan University

When I was in graduate school, working on my MLS degree with an archives concentration, I took a summer class in Encoded Archival Description (EAD). I also took a class in XML and worked with TEI (Text Encoding Initiative) in my job at the University Archives. I felt well-prepared to do this kind of encoding work wherever I might land after graduating. A year after graduation, I found myself back at my undergraduate institution, a very small liberal arts college (Milligan University in Tennessee) where I was the only archivist (and a combination archivist/librarian at that). We did not have the means to use EAD, but my predecessor had already started working on transferring our finding aids from PDFs on the library website to HTML format to be embedded on our institutional repository website. This was a route that was feasible for us to have more modern finding aids despite not having EAD capabilities. Thus, I undertook continuing the project and learning HTML. Using the free training website W3Schools ([www.w3schools.com](http://www.w3schools.com)), I learned the basics of HTML, which came fairly easy to me due to already being familiar with XML. I started working on how we could improve an HTML format from the bare bones basics. I learned how to add links so that you could skip to various parts of the finding aid if it was particularly long. Additionally, I consulted with IT to find a good free editing program to write the HTML in instead of using a basic word processor or text editor, since I had learned encoding using Oxygen XML Editor. This has ended up being an easy, streamlined process for us to present our finding aids in a better way, all without costing us anything.

To format the finding aids in HTML, I created a template that can be easily opened in Atom, the encoding editor program that IT suggested I use. We also have a finding aid template, so I essentially translated that template into HTML. With some trial and error on our institutional repository, I determined what parts of the HTML header were necessary and how to write up the HTML template to translate properly. The template is based on my beginner's knowledge of HTML, but does include some

Top: Screenshot from a finding aid on Milligan University's digital repository. Photo from the [Dean Walker Presidential Papers finding aid](#) on Milligan Digital Repository. Bottom: Screenshot from a finding aid in HTML in Atom. Photo from the [Charles R Taber Papers finding aid](#).

1. Subseries: Faculty Meetings, 1950-1970, undated

2. Subseries: Personnel Files, 1951-1966, undated RESTRICTED

3. Subseries: General Files, 1937-1973, undated

**VI: Series: Financial, 1942-1967, undated**

1. Subseries: Debt, 1953-1967, undated

2. Subseries: General Files, 1942-1967, undated

**VII: Series: Subject Files, 1927-1973, undated**

1. Subseries: Colleges, 1954-1968, undated

2. Subseries: Commencement, 1951-1968

3. Subseries: Ministry and Churches, 1951-1967, undated

4. Subseries: Speeches and Writings, 1947-1967, undated

5. Subseries: General Files, 1927-1973, undated

Most series and subseries are arranged alphabetically, with the exception of the Board of Trustees series and most of the CASC series, which are arranged chronologically.

**Scope and Content Note:**

The presidential papers of Dean Walker are divided into seven series: Board of Trustees, Buildings, CASC (Council for the Advancement of Small Colleges), Correspondence, Faculty, Financial, and Subject Files. The Buildings series is further broken down into three subseries: General Files, Chapel, and Library. The CASC series is further broken down into four series: General, Correspondence, Meetings, and Newsletters. The Correspondence series is further broken down into seven subseries: Campus Activities, Churches, Financial, Form Letters, Individual, Institutional and Subject, and Students. The Faculty series is further broken down into three subseries: Faculty Meetings, Personnel Files (which is restricted), and General Files. The Financial series is further broken down into two subseries: Debt and General Files. The Subject Files series is further broken down into five subseries: Colleges, Commencement, Ministry and Churches, Speeches and Writings, and General Files.

options to use when necessary. For example, I have included instructions on how to make words red for restricted items, how to include notes on folders, and how to link to other parts of the finding aid. Another tool that I've used in encoding finding aids is Microsoft Excel. For the most part, I can just copy and paste the information from the Word document version of the finding aid into the HTML template, but sometimes that can be tedious with long folder lists. I've set up an Excel spreadsheet to quickly wrap (enclose) each item in a folder list in the proper HTML tags by having columns for the opening and closing tags and a column in between for the folder name. Then I can quickly copy all of that information over to the HTML template and not have to copy and paste each folder item individually. This has saved a lot of time for even the longest finding aids, which makes it much easier to quickly get polished finding aids up on our institutional repository. HTML has proven to be an easy jump from my XML/EAD training and a great way to still get nice-looking finding aids up on our website.

When my predecessor started the initial work on transforming finding aids into HTML, she was using a Notepad++ for Windows. Having experienced the Oxygen XML Editor, I contacted our IT liaison to find out what a good substitute program to use for free would be. He suggested Atom from GitHub. This open-source text editor was able to handle writing in HTML and was very customizable for various add-ons that helped improve the encoding work. Unfortunately, GitHub announced that they were sunsetting Atom a year ago. My desktop iteration of Atom still works, but it is probably unavailable to anyone new. Even if it is still available, it is probably worth exploring other options since it appears to be going away. There are several other options that appear to be good options, although I will keep using Atom as long as I can because I have it set up to do that work I need done.

In my position as a solo archivist at a small institution with few resources, I have found being able to transform our finding aids from a list of PDFs into HTML-encoded webpages to be a nice addition to our archives offerings. While I still include a PDF version for users to download, users can now look at the different finding aids on individual pages of our institutional repository. Additionally, if we digitize items from a collection, they can be placed on the institutional repository in the collection that has the finding aid as its landing page. This gives a more professional appearance to our archives online and has been easy and cost-effective to implement.

## Solo Archivists Section Steering Committee

2023–2024

<b>Julie Yamashita</b>	Chair	Lanternman House Museum and Archives
<b>Hilary Swett</b>	Vice Chair / Chair-Elect / Regional Representatives Co-Lead	Writers Guild Foundation
<b>Alison Quirion</b>	Regional Representatives Co-Lead	Santa Monica Studio
<b>Rebecca Leung</b>	Events Coordinator	Mills College at Northeastern University
<b>Allison Bundy</b>	Newsletter Editor	Concordia College
<b>Shaun Kirkpatrick</b>	Web Liaison	Chubb Archives

### Get in Touch!

[soloarchivists.saa@gmail.com](mailto:soloarchivists.saa@gmail.com)

### [Visit Us Online!](#)

Our microsite can now be found in the Sections listing under the name Solo Archivists Section!

#### ***solo archivist***

*n.* ~ an individual who is the only staff member  
or the only formally trained archivist working in an archives

*Dictionary of Archives Terminology, s.v. "solo archivist," accessed September 1, 2023, [dictionary.archivists.org/entry/solo-archivist.html](https://dictionary.archivists.org/entry/solo-archivist.html).*



Lone Arrangers  
Section

SOLO, newsletter of the Solo Archivists Section, is published twice each year in the spring and fall. Deadlines for contributions are **January 15** (spring issue) and **July 15** (fall issue). Articles, photos, and announcements of interest to the community of solo archivists should be submitted to the SAS newsletter editor at [soloarchivists.saa@gmail.com](mailto:soloarchivists.saa@gmail.com).