

FROM THE CHAIR

Joyce Chapman

I hope you'll all be able to make it to the Description Section meeting at the annual conference in San Diego. We're shaking it up this year (the long sought-after termination of repetitive announcements at the beginning of the meeting has arrived!) We'll start off by announcing the winners of the four open Description Section offices, get a brief rundown of the 2012 Description Expo, then launch right into an exciting round of lightning talks, followed by Q&A and discussion. Any further announcements will take place at the end of the meeting. The meeting will take place:



Date: Thursday, August 9th

Time: 3:30-5:30pm

Location: check on-site programs for meeting room info

Below is a list of some of the description-themed pre-conferences, conference presentations, and posters that will happen this year at SAA:

Pre-conference programs

Pre-conference registration info available here: <http://www2.archivists.org/conference/2012/san-diego/registration-fees>

"Describing Moving images with PBCore." Monday August 6, 9-5pm

"SAA Standard: Encoded Archival Context – Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families (EAD-CPF)." Monday August 6, 9-5pm

"Fundamentals of Encoded Archival Description and XSLT Stylesheets." Monday & Tuesday, August 6&7, 9-5pm

Conference programs

Session 202, "Hybrids and legacies: challenges of finding aids in the digital age." Thursday August 9, 1:30-3:00pm

Session 301, "Crowdsourcing our collections: three case studies of user participation in metadata creation and enhancement." Friday August 10, 8:30-9:30am

Session 401, "Linking data across libraries, archives, and museums." Friday August 10, 10-11:30am

Session 505, "Solving our problems with authority and sharing: current developments and prospects." Saturday August 11, 8-9:30am

Session 603, "The objects of our affection: arranging and describing artifacts in archival collections." Saturday August 11, 12:30-1:30pm

Session 703, "Archival description: regional, continental, and global." Saturday August 11, 2-3:30pm

Poster presentations

P10, "A GIS finding aid for archival materials on the coal fields of southern Colorado."

Thursday, August 9, 9:30-10am and Friday, August 10, 3-3:30pm

If you are a representative or liaison who would like to make announcements at the Description Section meeting, please get in touch with me beforehand so that we can post your report on the website and be sure to keep on track with time.

Enjoy the newsletter,
Joyce



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NEWS AND NOTES

Technical Subcommittee on Describing Archives

By Gordon Daines, TS-DACS Chair

The Technical Subcommittee on Describing Archives: A Content Standard (TS-DACS) has completed a draft revision of the standard. Major changes include shifting the content from Chapters 9 and 10 to Chapter 2 (Chapter 9 content was moved to 2.6 and Chapter 10 content to 2.7) and the augmentation of Chapter 11 (now Chapter 9) which deals with archival authority records. The draft standard is available at <http://www2.archivists.org/groups/technical-subcommittee-on-describing-archives-a-content-standard-dacs/describing-archives-a-c> and TS-DACS is accepting comments on the draft through September 2012. Comments can be sent to the chair of TS-DACS at gordon_daines@byu.edu.

EAD Revision Progress Report

By: Michael Rush, TS-EAD Co-Chair

The Technical Subcommittee for Encoded Archival Description (TS-EAD) held a working meeting at Yale University's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library in March 2011 with the support of the Gladys Kriebel Delmas Foundation, the Nationaal Archief of the Netherlands, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. TS-EAD spent three days considering suggestions received during the EAD revision comment period and additional changes proposed by TS-EAD members.

Since the March working meeting TS-EAD has continued to deliberate over revisions to the EAD schema and the Schema Development Team has begun to implement agreed-upon changes. An alpha version of the revised schema will be released around the time of the 2012 SAA Annual Meeting, at which TS-EAD members will present preliminary revision decisions at the EAD Roundtable meeting.

The release of the alpha version of the revised EAD schema will begin a second comment period, which will continue until the anticipated release of a beta revised schema in the winter of 2013. The beta release will be followed by a brief, final comment period. TS-EAD anticipates releasing the new version of EAD, complete with a revised tag library and migration tools, in the summer of 2013.

Expanding Access Grant from NEH Exposes Northwest Collections, Builds NWDA Program Members' Capacity

By Jodi Allison-Bunnell, Northwest Digital Archives Program Manager

With the completion of a year-long grant project this month, participants in Northwest Digital Archives' Expanding Access Grant have exposed more than 500 new collections in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana through NWDA's database of EAD finding aids at <http://nwda.orbiscascade.org/>.

Six institutions hold the regionally and nationally significant collections represented by the new finding aids: Montana State University, Western Oregon University, The Evergreen State College, Oregon Institute of Technology, Eastern Washington University, and Boise State University.

The collections included in this project are not only important in their own right, but significantly complement the more than 15,000 collections already represented in the NWDA database of Encoded Archival Description (EAD) finding aids. The project has added three new members to the NWDA program and provided additional support for three current NWDA members who have been unable to participate fully in the program until now. It has provided training in descriptive standards and EAD encoding and administration for new and long-term implementation of those standards at participating institutions; additional descriptive support staff for institutions that require it; administrative and technical support for the project; and travel support for project participants to participate in the annual in-person meeting of all NWDA members.

Participants are now prepared to make information about all new collections they process available through the NWDA database without further grant support. They are fully involved in a program with a proven track record of providing excellent access to materials, sustainable support for and by its membership, and a growing and evolving mission. The descriptive work of the participants is supported by NWDA's suite of possible workflows for EAD creation and maintenance: XML encoding templates, a web encoding template, Archivist's Toolkit export, and MARC-to-EAD conversion.

The end results are expanded access to the participants' collections, skill building, and revisions to descriptive practices and processing workflows that will continue this level of access to their collections in the future.

They join NWDA's thirty-seven other members in a regional project that creates enhanced access to information about archival collections in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, and Alaska. With the support of this and other grants and the internally-funded work of its own membership, the NWDA database has expanded two and a half times in size in the last year, and use has doubled to an average of 40,000 finding aid retrievals a month.

Further information about the NWDA program is available at <http://orbiscascade.org/index/northwest-digital-archives>. The project was funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

SAA's EAC-CPF Workshop: Scholarships Available! (Archives & Archivists (A&A) List digest for February 8 and June 21, 2012)

SAA, the University of Virginia Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities (IATH), and the Simmons College Graduate School of Library and Information Science have joined forces under an Institute for Museum and Library Services grant ("Building a National Archival Authorities Infrastructure") to provide training on Encoded Archival Context - Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families. Find out about the SAA Standard Encoded Archival Context-Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families (EAC-CPF) at no charge by taking advantage of an IMLS grant. October 29 workshop in Princeton

http://saa.archivists.org/4DCGI/events/345.html?Action=Conference_Detail&ConfID_W=345&Time=148788640

Tentative schedule for the remaining workshops:

January/February 2013 – Southeast; April 2013 – Northeast; June 2013 – Northwest

Archival Networks and EAD Consortia - 'Brown Bag Lunch' at SAA 2012 (EAD Digest – March 27-28, 2012 (#2012-35))

EAD consortia and aggregators of archival resources share broad interests in the ongoing exchange of information about each others' projects and programs. Why reinvent the wheel?

Where: SAA 76th Annual Meeting, San Diego Hilton Bayfront -- room to be determined. Please consult conference program for location details, once available.

When: Thursday, August 9, 2012, 12:00-1:15 pm

Goal: to increase communication across consortia, in order to share expertise and develop a common vision for broader archival description and discovery networks.

Agenda: brief regional/statewide/national program updates, followed by structured discussion.

Additional agenda details forthcoming. Anyone interested is welcome to attend.

Jodi Allison-Bunnell, Orbis Cascade and NWDA

Jennifer Schaffner, OCLC Research

Adrian Turner, Online Archive of California and the California Digital Library

Simmons GSLIS Launches Fully Online Master's Degree with Archives Concentration (Ica-list)

Simmons College Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GSLIS) is pleased to announce our new ONLINE Master's degree with a concentration in archives. This cohort-based program begins in Fall 2012.

Coursework in this Masters program is fully online with the archival internships that are part of the program offered as on-site experiential learning opportunities tailored to the students' individual physical site location.

This online LIS Masters degree with a concentration in archives prepares graduates to enter the field of archives, preservation and cultural heritage access through online instruction and on-site internships.

The program begins with two courses in the fall. Providing all coursework is completed on schedule, the degree can be completed by May 2014.

For more information about the Archives concentration at Simmons GSLIS, please see <http://www.simmons.edu/gslis/academics/programs/archives.php>

Updated Online Database (ARCHIVES Digest for Wednesday, July 11, 2012)

The Orange County Regional History Center recently updated our online database to include over 11,000 catalog records. If you are looking for materials related to the history of Orlando, Orange County, or Central Florida, you may want to begin your search at

<http://thehistorycenter.pastperfect-online.com>. This is only a portion of our holdings, so if you don't find what you're looking for, feel free to contact us (the correct staff person's contact information will appear at the top of the record). Our online catalog is updated bi-annually, with the next update occurring in December 2012. Garret B. Kremer-Wright, CA Archivist, Orange County Regional History Center.

Music Fans Asked to Catalogue 4,000 Victorian Scores

By Katie Scott (Wired.co.uk 03 May 2012)

Oxford University's Bodleian Library has launched a crowdsourced attempt to get members of the public to describe 4,000 pieces of music. Read more: <http://www.wired.co.uk/news/archive/2012-05/03/whats-the-score>)

FEATURE ARTICLES

Towards Establishing a National Archival Authorities Cooperative

By Daniel V. Pitti

University of Virginia Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities

In the fall of 2011, the Institute for Museum and Library Services awarded a grant to the University of Virginia Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities (IATH) and the Simmons College Graduate School of Library and Information Science for the *Building a National Archival Authorities*

Infrastructure project. The project involves two complementary activities that are intended to lead to the realization of a long-held desire of the American archival community: the implementation of archival authority control and description. The first activity, a series of at least seven SAA regional workshops with generous scholarships to encourage participation, is devoted to increasing the archival community's expertise in the use of the Encoded Archival Context–Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families (EAC-CPF), the international encoding standard for archival authority control. The second activity, a series of three meetings, is focused on a community-based exploration of the essential requirements for establishing a sustainable National Archival Authorities Cooperative (NAAC).



In May 2012, 87 archivists, librarians, curators, scholars, and representatives of funding agencies and foundations met at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in

Washington, D.C. to begin exploring the business, governance, and technological requirements for establishing a sustainable national archival authorities cooperative.

Archivist of the United States David Ferriero welcomed participants and the meeting opened with a plenary session, led by project director Daniel Pitti (IATH). Pitti provided an overview and history of the work, placing it in context with the long-term goal of realizing archival authority description.

The project co-director, Katherine Wisser (Simmons College), described the series of SAA EAC-CPF workshops and scholarships.

Pitti, Ray Larson (Information School, University of California, Berkeley) and Brian Tingle (California Digital Library, University of California) then demonstrated the NEH- and Mellon-funded Social Networks and Archival Context (SNAC) project. SNAC was presented both as a demonstration of the feasibility of building an archival authorities files based on Encoded Archival Context-Corporate Bodies, Persons, Families (EAC-CPF) from existing Encoded Archival Description (EAD)-encoded finding aids, and as a demonstration that aggregated and interrelated archival authorities records can be used to provide integrated access to and context for understanding dispersed archival resources.

Following the SNAC presentation, Pitti then outlined the rationale for building a National Archival Authorities Cooperative (NAAC). He noted that currently descriptions of people are intermixed with the description of records in a single apparatus, the finding aid. Archivists have advocated for several decades to separate the description of people from the description of records in order to make description more economic, flexible, accurate, and effective. But, the quality of the current description is uneven. Where SNAC has been reasonably effective in identifying and extracting the relevant data and will continue to refine the processing, algorithms alone will not ensure accuracy and completeness or ensure the currency of the data.

He also pointed out that archival authority control needs to be cooperative, requiring consistent use of names for the same entity across descriptions. This can only effectively be accomplished by maintaining a single, shared authority file. There are economic benefits to cooperating: the same people appear in different collections of documents, different finding aids. Working cooperatively will also enable interrelating different collections and interrelating people documented in the records. Cooperative authorities will enable integrated access to distributed records: all of the records relevant to one person, corporate body, or family. A shared national authority file would also be a substantial historical resource, quite apart from the access enabled by it.

The attendees were enthused about the potential of a national archival authorities file to provide integrated access to archival resources distributed throughout the United States. Similarly, the biographical-historical information assembled in SNAC demonstrated the power of aggregated and interrelated archival authority records to reveal the social, professional, and intellectual networks within which the people documented in archival records lived and worked.

Despite the enthusiasm for the benefits of a national archival authorities cooperative, participants in the meeting were unclear about how such a cooperative would be built and maintained, and were concerned that it would strain already stretched resources. The uncertainty and concerns became clear in breakout sessions on the first day of the meeting.

On the second day of the meeting, Clifford Lynch, Director of the Coalition for Networked Information, opened the discussion by saying that there were two possible approaches to building the cooperative: using computational methods such as those demonstrated in SNAC or manual creation and maintenance. What emerged from this discussion was a clear consensus for a combination of the two, with the initial work based on the techniques being developed in SNAC, and followed up by a combination of computational methods and manual review with computational assistance. The discussion then shifted to who would do the manual review.

Donald Waters from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation argued for a broad, inclusive editing community, one comprising archivists, librarians, and scholars. The scholars, he pointed out, go into greater detail than is possible for librarians and archivists, and they could make substantial contributions to a “continuum of perfection.” The participants agreed with this expansive view of the community.

Also discussed at the meeting were the business (funding, staffing, and hosting) and governance (policies and procedures) models. The participants concluded that both models were difficult to address until the technical model was more developed and the issue of hosting the cooperative was resolved. The participants generally agreed that NARA would be the ideal host, and a NARA representative said that there was interest in hosting. Project staff and NARA representatives will pursue this possibility.

Two additional meetings of a small team of experts will be held to further develop the ideas that emerged at the May meeting. The first of these two meetings will be in October 2012 and the second in the spring of 2013. As a blueprint for the cooperative is developed, drafts will be made available to solicit broad community input. The final plan and recommendations will be released as a white paper in the fall of 2013.



EAD: Having Your Cake and Eating It Too

By Kate Bowers, Harvard University

Author's note: I encourage Descriptive Notes readers to read the full list of innovative uses of finding aid data that I put into a Google doc.¹ I especially encourage readers to add to it!

Big changes are coming to EAD in 2013. Many of the changes are designed to "privilege elements and design features that support data interchange over pure presentation."² Do you look on this prospect with fear and trembling, or can you hardly wait? Either way, your imagination might be running wild. So here are some solid examples of innovation done with the current EAD standard to give you a peek at what the future might hold.

Having your cake

EAD has always been structured data amenable to a variety of displays and re-use; however, most interfaces display EAD as whole documents. This section describes some interfaces that depart

¹ See and edit the list here: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1_b4cE8D7TpxGW-T0FeEtMhXMBiLS2TtGj0TxdxTilVc/edit

² EAD Revision Plan http://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/saa11EADForum_Process.pptx presented at EAD forum during SAA Annual Meeting, August 2011 (accessed July 8, 2012).

from the traditional document-like presentation of finding aids and instead use finding aid components as discrete information units.

Cross-repository collection and component searches

These are search interfaces that bring back results from finding aids aggregated from multiple repositories. Results may come from any level in a finding aid (collection, series, subseries, file, item, or other levels).

A robust example is the online catalogue of archives and manuscripts in French university and research libraries, Calames.³ Similar interfaces are offered by ICA-AtoM and under development at the Northwest Digital Archives.

In Calames, searching can be done by keyword, and results may also be sorted or filtered. Clicking on an individual result will display the component in its hierarchical context.

A search for "Kennedy," for example, renders as a first result *Correspondance de Jacqueline Kennedy à Louise de Vilmorin*. If a user clicks on this result, the hierarchical levels—from repository to the discovered component—are concisely displayed. A user can quickly see that the Kennedy/de Vilmorin correspondence is part of the *Correspondance reçue* (incoming correspondence), which is found in the *Correspondance* series which is part of the *Fonds Louise de Vilmorin*. Clicking on any level of the hierarchy will open a similar display of the finding aid at the selected level. Furthermore, small left and right arrows navigate to the next and previous component of the finding aid. (See Figure 1)

Figure 1: First result in a search for "Kennedy" on the Calames site



Other component searching tools

Along with cross-repository searches, there are several single-repository search interfaces that include components in results for their individual repositories. These include the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Brigham Young University. Although the Archivists' Toolkit (AT)

³ Catalogue en Ligne des Archives et des Manuscrits de l'Enseignement Supérieur
<http://www.calames.abes.fr/pub/>

doesn't have an integrated public search interface, archivists who search for resources in the AT can choose to include finding aid components in search results.

Unified display of finding aid data with linked digital objects

The Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution has integrated the display of digitized content with finding aids. The "Gallery" view of any collection is a light table display of digitized content. Clicking on "View item" produces an integrated display of the digital image with its descriptive data. The descriptive data includes a link to the full finding aid. (See Figure 2)

Figure 2: Image of digitized content shown in context with its finding aid description.

Ileana Sonnabend telegram to Leo Castelli, 1965 Apr. 15

Physical Details: Telegram : 1 item :
typescript ; 20 x 22 cm.

Sender: Ileana Sonnabend (Paris, France)

Recipient: Leo Castelli (New York, N.Y.)

Description: Sonnabend instructs Castelli to send her two works by Andy Warhol, *Car crashes on white*, so that she can sell them.

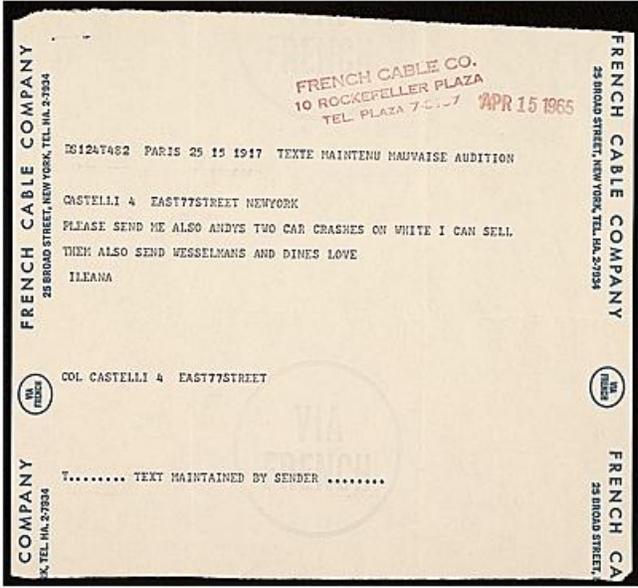
Forms part of: [Leo Castelli Gallery records circa 1880-2000, bulk 1957-1999](#)

Citation: Ileana Sonnabend telegram to Leo Castelli, 1965 Apr. 15. Leo Castelli Gallery records, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

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Digital ID: 9418

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Eating your cake, too

The above innovations might seem to break certain cardinal principles by sectioning finding aids and delivering components, but they respect the concepts of archival context and provenance by providing an easy means to access to the whole finding aid.

There is an innovation that returns to the traditional idea of EAD finding aid as document, but updates the document to make the most of mobile technology.

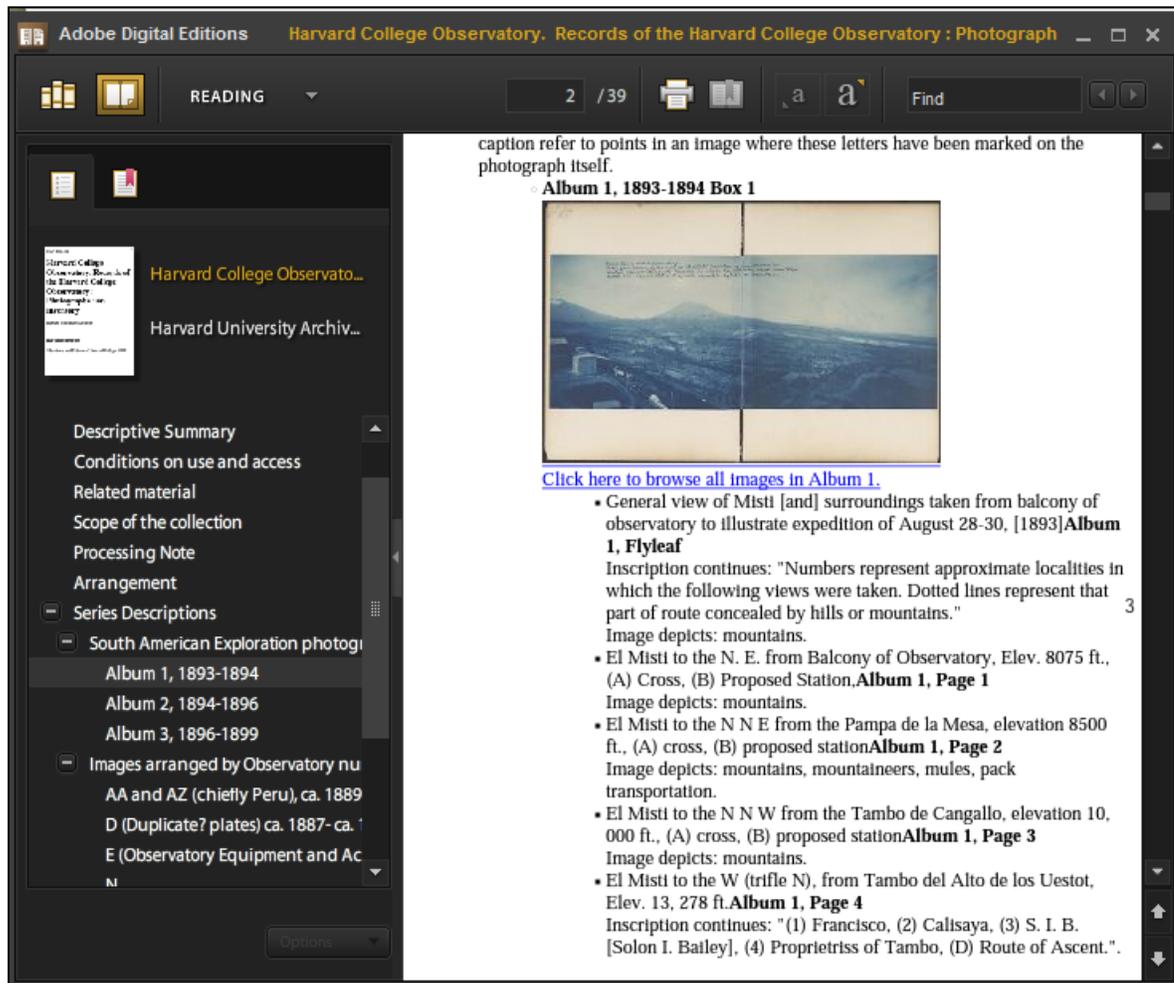
Finding aids as e-books

Michael Vandermillen of Harvard University is developing a transformation that takes EAD and produces an e-book conforming to the EPUB standard. (Figure 3)

Users will be able to download a finding aid as an e-book for use on mobile devices. Standard features of e-books include bookmarking, annotation, and searching across

e-books. E-book finding aids will readily allow researchers to collect and annotate their own finding aid anthologies and keep them accessible via mobile devices. Additional uses of the e-book format for EAD data could be to create single finding aid documents for very large finding aids that are unwieldy when delivered as HTML or PDF.

Figure 3: An e-book finding aid as displayed using Adobe Digital Editions



Having your cake and eating it 2.0

We can't say exactly where this data-interchange focus of EAD will take us, but let's take a few flights of fancy.

Imagine a simple data-dependent user empowerment feature like re-sorting finding aid components. If the user doesn't find the typical box order in a finding aid helpful, why not allow the user to easily re-sort the components chronologically or alphabetically? Maybe the user could even customize the display order of these elements. Imagine the ease with which these tasks are done in a spreadsheet or relational database being available in finding aids.

And while we're at it, why not empower users to re-work the data in any number of ways? Perhaps users should be able to make their own custom aggregations of entire finding aids (as the e-book would do) or of selected components. Imagine a portfolio or shopping cart feature that allows users to interact with finding aid data as their research needs dictate.

Archivists might also find it helpful to be able to analyze data based on nimble combinations of factors. Imagine being able to get hard numbers on the age and size of sectors of your repository's holdings for collection development, preservation and conservation, collaboration, collection assessment, grant proposals, collection statistics, facilities planning, or other purposes.

Let's take it a step further. What if we had novel ways of showing and acting upon threads of connectivity? Digital humanities scholars are already using visualization tools rather than text-based sorting and selecting. For finding aids, visual threads might link one collection with another, or they might be a set of connections among hundreds of collections. And since I've started down this road, I'll add all kinds of data that could potentially be linked or integrated to our finding aids, just as the Smithsonian's digital images already are. Imagine integrated and/or linked Encoded Archival Context records, digitized and born-digital content, OCR or crowdsourced transcriptions, and user comments or tags. We're already approaching this kind of connectivity with the EAC records and linked finding aids in the Social Networks and Archival Context Project (SNAC) prototype.⁴

The really wonderful thing about EAD is that it is already structured data that adheres to archival principles. EAD that is more focused on data interchange will provide greater flexibility while archivists keep on doing what they have been doing for centuries: acquiring, describing, and preserving archives and context.

⁴ SNAC: The Social Networks and Archival Context Project prototype:
<http://socialarchive.iath.virginia.edu/xtf/search>