Minutes of the 1999 Description Section Meeting

August 27, 1999

Section Chair Rob Spindler welcomed the members in attendance. In summarizing the work done by the section during the past year, Rob noted that bylaws had been drafted for the section and that the section had sponsored several sessions at the 1999 conference. He thanked past chair Heather Heywood and at-large steering committee member Susan Hamburger for their respective contributions to those efforts. Rob also pointed out that the reorganization of the Technical Subcommittee on Descriptive Standards (TSDS) provides the Description Section an opportunity to become more vital to SAA and to the profession.

First on the agenda were reports from SAA committees, representatives and liaisons. Michael Fox reported from the International Congress on Archives (ICA), Committee on Descriptive Standards. He reported changes to the International Standard for Archival Description (ISAD(G)) including the creation of a statement of principles, the consolidation of the number of elements, the addition of new elements, and the fact that the use of the creator element has been made mandatory. He noted that the committee is to meet in September in Sweden to finalize changes for the ballot to be presented at the ICA plenary in 2000. All rules are to be incorporated into a single code regardless of format. The rules presently contain additional information for treatment of various formats.

In his role as SAA's representative to the ALA Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access (CC:DA) Michael was a member of the Task Force on Rule 0.24 (the AACR2 rule that governs the choice of cataloging rules for multi-faceted works, e.g. an electronic map). The task force is reviewing changes to the rule, which may be of great potential interest to the archival community as well as providing an opportunity for archivists to get more involved in the discussion of the rules. The outcome of the task force's work will have a bearing on the proposed revisions to the Rules for Archival Description and on any future revisions to APPM and/or integration of the two. The task force's report will go forward to the Joint Committee for the Revision of AACR.

As SAA's liaison to ALA's Committee on Machine Readable Bibliographic Information (MARBI), Michael commented on the issue of nonfiling zones (tag 245, indicator 2) and the need to exclude other areas from filing. An example of the use non-filing indicators within the text of a field as well as the beginning would be to exclude from indexing a cataloger's comment inserted into a transcribed title such as [sic] that indicates a typo in the source document. A proposal has been made to create characters that would be embedded in fields to indicate that material which follows them should be excluded. The issue is still under consideration within MARBI as Discussion Paper 118. The discussion paper itself and the summary minutes of the MARBI meetings themselves are available at http://www.loc.gov/marc.

Linkage from the 856 field (Electronic Location and Access) to the 555 (Cumulative Index/Finding Aids Note) and 583 (Action Note) fields has been approved. A subfield for the

URL was added, creating a direct link from field to finding aid. The addition of other fields was suggested, and such a proposal will be made at ALA Midwinter. Nicole Bouch[3] is a member of the ALA Committee on Descriptive Standards and is coordinating solicitation of submissions. Submissions require the identification of fields, provision of a rationale why they should be linked, and provision of real examples. Michael will coordinate submission to the LC office. It is expected that submissions will also be made by members of the cartographic community.

Bill Landis reported from the SAA Technical Subcommittee on Descriptive Standards (TSDS). TSDS has participated in reviews of ISAD(G), the draft of the EAD Application Guidelines, and the draft of LC's Archival Moving Image Materials. In the latter case, TSDS reviewed both the cataloging guidelines and the extensive commentary provided by the Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA). The Consortium for the Computer Interchange of Museum Information published guidelines for best practices in the use of Dublin Core in the museum community; TSDS gave input from the archival perspective. The Canadian Committee on Data Structure Standards (CCDSS) requested commentary on a draft RAD/EAD Matrix accompanied by suggestions for additional EAD tags. TSDS participated in providing comments at the invitation of Kris Kiesling, chair of the EAD Working Group. Michael Fox, SAA's MARBI liaison, invited TSDS to provide examples of how the archival community would use a linking field in the USMARC 555 field for finding aid notes. TSDS provided examples, which were incorporated into MARBI Proposal 99:8.

Bill also reported that TSDS had discussed processes at its August 25th meeting. He noted that the scope of TSDS is different than was that of CAIE. Standards are submitted to TSDS from different areas; it gets requests for review from the standards committee and also gets requests for comment from SAA and external groups. TSDS discussed a process that would ensure participation of at least two subcommittee members in all reviews that TSDS agrees to undertake. Bill encouraged interested section members to join the SAACAIE listserv in order to observe the work of TSDS and the Standards Committee. Section members may contact him at blandis@uci.edu to request to be subscribed to this list.

Bill reported that, as the parent of the EAD Working Group, TSDS had renewed EADWG's charge for another year; that TSDS also participated in the proposal to MARBI of additional fields for linking, as reported by Michael Fox; and that Dennis Meissner of the Minnesota Historical Society is the incoming chair of TSDS. Bill added that TSDS and the Committee on Education and Professional Development (CEPD) will undertake a review of SAA's continuing education offerings relating to description. He called for feedback on description workshops, which he will funnel to the reviewers. Comments may be sent to blandis@uci.edu

Helen Tibbo, SAA Council liaison for the coming year, gave a welcome from Council. She emphasized that Council recognizes how hard groups within SAA are working and that Council wants to facilitate the work of those groups.

Kris Kiesling, Chair of the EAD Working Group, noted that EADWG meetings are open to all who would like to attend. Kris reported that the EAD Working Group last year received an Institute of Museum and Library Services grant to draft a new version of the EAD Application Guidelines. A subcommittee of the EADWG met at Bentley to redraft the guidelines. Last year

the Tag Library was published; the new publication is a guide to EAD from head to toe. Kris noted that the working group would be discussing at its upcoming meeting the possibility of repositioning the group, including increasing its international participation and becoming involved in fundraising.

Second on the agenda were Section Reports. Ann Hodges, Descriptive Notes newsletter editor, renewed her appeal for contributions to and feedback on the newsletter. Diana Smith, coordinator for the section's web site, noted that the Description Section's site is the most extensive among SAA section sites. She also asked for contributions and feedback, and noted that she had reorganized the home page during the past year. Holly Hodges, Section Vice Chair, reported on the Finding Aids Fair and thanked Jon Reynolds for his assistance in establishing a site for the electronic finding aids and Debra Mills for arranging for an ethernet connection. Rob encouraged section members to visit the Fair.

Before turning to agenda item three, discussion of program proposals, Rob announced that he will be the section's liaison to the program committee for the next year. Session proposal forms were to be left with Holly Hodges, incoming Section Chair, and were available in the conference packet as well as on the SAA web site. Deadline for submission of program proposals was October 8. The 2000 conference has no formal theme, but proposals that look toward the future of the profession and reflect its diversity are requested. Rob noted that sessions may take several formats, and urged consideration of all possibilities.

Returning to his role as Section Chair, Rob opened discussion of ideas for session proposals to be sponsored by the section. He stressed the importance of keeping descriptive issues on the SAA program, given the fast-changing nature of descriptive issues. In contrast to last year's fruitful discussion, no proposal ideas were presented during the formal meeting.

Agenda item four being the nomination and election of a Vice Chair/Chair-Elect, Rob presented Bill Landis and Susan Hamburger as the nominees. Each gave a brief summary of his/her qualifications for the office. Ballots were counted by Vice Chair, Holly Hodges, and Rob announced that Bill Landis had been elected. He will serve the section as Vice Chair for the coming year and will become Chair the following year.

Agenda item five was approval of the new Description Section bylaws. The bylaws were published twice in Descriptive Notes (a first draft and a slightly revised version) and were posted for most of the year on the section's web site, during which time comments were requested. The bylaws were also distributed at the section meeting. Upon the motion for their approval being seconded, the bylaws were approved by acclamation in a voice vote. Rob thanked Heather Heywood, past Chair, for her fine work on preparing the bylaws. The meeting was adjourned.