

**Society of American Archivists
Description Section Meeting Minutes
Friday, August 19, 2005
New Orleans, Louisiana**

Attendance - 90

Section Reports

- John Rees is stepping down as Newsletter editor
- Finding Aids Fair report – Katherine Wisser

The theme this year is *Celebrating Scope and Content: Innovative uses of narratives in Finding Aids* and is available online at:

<http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/descr/2005faid.htm>

Reports from SAA Committees, Liaisons, and Related Groups

SAA Council Representative – Elaine Engst

- Elaine's successor will be Ben Primer.
- Annual reporting form has been given to section officers.
- The program committee guidelines have been revised. Starting in 2007, sections and roundtables can submit as many session proposals as they like but may endorse only two, which should be sent to the program committee with a letter of explanation. Endorsement does not guarantee a spot in the program. These guidelines will not be in effect for the 2006 meeting because it will be jointly sponsored by COSA and NAGARA.

- SAA Strategic Priorities

These are on SAA's website and are: Technology, Diversity, and Public Support.

Responses are due by September 15, but will be accepted later. Send to Nancy Beaumont, nbeaumont@archivists.org

Program Committee 2006 – Vicki Walch

- The deadline is October 7th for conference and pre-conference proposals.

EAD Working Group – Kris Kiesling

- Daniel Pitti is working on a schema for EAD
- Kathy Wisser did a web survey of EAD tools. There were 70 respondents, half from institutions with five or fewer FTE. Respondents were from twenty-six states and several countries. The results show that the EAD Cookbook is widely used and pointed to the following needs: tools portal, discussions are being held with the SAA webmaster and EAD roundtable; stylesheets; EAD to MARC converter; 2002 application guidelines.
- The Working Group meeting will take place Sunday at 9 am.

MARBI – Kris Kiesling

- At the Machine readable cataloging meeting, which happens at ALA, several proposed changes to MARC were made including the following: additional geographic subfields at

a higher level; create subfields for subject access to images. The proposals are available on MARBI web site: <http://www.loc.gov/marc/marbi/list-p.html>

DA:CS – Kris Kiesling

- Approved as SAA standard on March 29, 2005.
- Workshops have been developed. Bill Landis has done a one-day overview workshop three times and Kathy Wisser and Lynn Holdzkom have taught a two-day workshop, *MARC According to DACS*, twice.

Diversity Committee – Elizabeth Konzak

- This is a new SAA committee.
- They have three goals: membership; increase knowledge of existing scholarships; review educational offerings.
- SAA units need to begin reporting on diversity initiatives
- The committee encourages feedback.

ALA Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access (CC:DA) – Mary Lacy

- Revision of AACR. Draft of part 1 released in 2004. Archivists felt that there was no accounting for developments in our field. SAA wanted revision to direct to appropriate standards. There was some disagreement whether revision should address manuscript material at all. There will be many referrals in the introduction, DA:CS especially. CCDA received a massive compendium. At the April 2005 meeting, a summary of which is available on the JSC website, the following discussion took place: arrangement of part 1 will be changed; language should be clearer and more direct; the new title will be Resource Discovery and Access, no longer AACR; it will be available online; there will be three parts (Resource Description, Relationships, Access Point Control). A prospectus has just been issued and is also available on the JSC website. <http://www.collectionscanada.ca/jsc/rda.html>. At the JSC meeting, several proposals were made in reference to incorporating core archival descriptive practices into the new code: extractions from DA:CS; principles in the introduction; and explicit references to DA:CS.

ICA Section on Professional Standards and Best Practices – Michael Fox

- The ICA is redoing the standards process. They have created a Section on Professional Standards and Best Practices. Michael Fox is serving on the steering committee. The ICA website has more information. <http://www.ica.org/body.php?pbodycode=SPS&plangue=eng>

Technical Subcommittee on Descriptive Standards – Brad Westbrook (outgoing chair)

- They are working on a standards portal project.
- The TSDS and RBMS are trying to formalize liaison relationships
- Members commented on AACR3
- Chris Prom is the new chair, members are Brad Westbrook, Adrian Turner, Chatham Ewing, Martha Mahard, and Kelcy Shepherd
- The committees to-do list includes: comments on DCRM and ISO's image metadata; drafting procedures for collecting comments about DACS and Glossary to trigger review;

draft a charge for EAC working group; participating in development of a standards portal (revision of SAA standards manual, putting information online, scope, basic descriptive elements, best implementation method).

Archivists' Toolkit Project – Brad Westbrook

- This a Mellon funded project. More information is available at <http://archiviststoolkit.org/>

- The first release will focus on core archival functions.
- A functional specification is now available on the website
- The year two goals are: build and test; hire interface consultant; release somewhere between August and November 2006.
- The project should be scalable to larger institutions.
- A business model is being developed for sustainability of the tool.

Encoded Archival Context Working Group – Daniel Pitti

- There is a session at SAA on EAC.
- TSDS is writing a charge to form an EAC working group
- EAC is an international grassroots effort, there is more activity right now in Europe
- The EAC tag library has been translated into Spanish, and a German translation is under way.

EAD Schema working group – Daniel Pitti

- Sub group of EAD working group
- Moving from DTD to schema
- Documentation involves incorporation of tag library into schema
- Schemas can facilitate lossless translations into other languages. XSLT is used as the transformation mechanism. Jerome McDonough wants to apply this principle to METS
- Data typing on attributes will constrain data
- The schema can incorporate fragments of tag information from one domain to another domain (e.g., EAD into METS). We are not pulling other schema into EAD yet
- The development schedule has slipped. Alpha version is scheduled to come out this fall, with the full blown version due next summer.
- The schema does not replace the DTD.

RLG – Anne Van Camp/Merrilee Proffit

- Descriptive Metadata Guidelines for RLG Cultural Materials
http://www.rlg.org/en/page.php?Page_ID=214

data structure – MARC

data content – ISAD

data format – ISO 8709, XML

These guidelines help to lay out core, additional, and bonus fields related to user functions. They are useful for digital library projects

- EAD report card has been released.

It is available on the website - http://www.rlg.org/en/page.php?Page_ID=20513

The files are open source and available on the website. An XSLT file to work with your own guidelines is part of this. You will need java and saxon skills to adapt.

The web version sits on a server, and you need to work with perl scripts to modify.

- Finding Aids Fair was coordinated with RLG

- A grant from the Earhart foundation has allowed for a redesign of Archival Resources.

It will be called ArchiveGrid – <http://archivegrid.org/>

MARC records and finding aids will be merged in results view. The look will be very different. RLG encourages comments. It will be available early next year, freely available for 3 months, and partially free after that.

- RLG will hold a forum on collection description next year.

New Business

- Election – Jane Rosario was elected Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect

A new newsletter editor has been appointed.

- Session ideas discussion was passed to a listserv discussion

- The membership committee announced the raffle for a scholarship to the annual meeting.

Program

Marcel Caya, Professor, Département d'histoire, Université du Québec à Montréal and Deputy Secretary General, International Council of Archives.

“Building a Tower of Babel?”

An analysis of scope and content notes in archival finding aids, the study looked at descriptive standards of different countries and their compatibility.

There are four standards, with the common objective of facilitating data exchange: ISAD (G); Manual of Archival Description (MAD3); DACS; RAD. The standards converge on two points, a basic archival descriptive entry and the compatibility of rules of description, which are defined similarly and the results compatible, except for the scope and content note.

The scope and content note differs in objectives and explanation. The questions then for the study were the following.

Are these differences important?

Do they lead to divergent results?

What is the consequence for the retrieval of information from finding aids?

The analysis involved a questionnaire of 51 questions in six sections and led to a FileMaker database of 800 entries in a number of languages (French, English, German, Spanish) and from Canada, the US, the UK, and Europe.

Preliminary conclusions are that the scope and content notes are understood differently even with each constituency and are too flexible for uniformity and compatibility.

Consistency is insufficient for indexing even within a system.