

# Descriptive Notes

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The Newsletter of the Description Section of the Society of American Archivists

Winter 1993-94

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## A Ragin' Cajun Meeting--Minutes from N'awlins

--Section Chair **Barbara Teague** called the meeting to order at 8 am on September 2, 1993, in New Orleans, Louisiana.

--**Marion Matters**, SAA's representative on ALA's CC:DA (American Library Association Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access) reported that the Joint Steering Committee for AACR2 is forming an international working group to discuss revisions to AACR2. Marion also discussed other CC:DA efforts, such as producing guidelines for cataloging reproductions; guidelines for cataloging non-bibliographic resources, such as Internet; attempting to make the cataloging rules available in electronic form.

--**Richard Szary**, SAA's representative to Network Advisory Committee, which advises the Library of Congress on network issues, then reported that the December NAC meeting focused on multimedia, and the June NAC meeting, held in conjunction with the Association of Library and Information Science Educators, examined library education and new technologies. Papers from both meetings are available from LC.

--**Jim Corsaro** reported on the joint NHPRC grant administered by the New York State Archives and Records Administration, the Alabama Department of Archives and History, and the New York State Library concerning the cataloging of archival maps. Over 400 bibliographic records were entered into RLIN, representing 35,000 maps. Since the project was completed, draft guidelines have been circulated for comment and will then be finalized.

--**Daniel Pitti** reported on a project at the University of California at Berkeley concerning developing a finding aid encoding standard. The project will seek to develop a standard method of encoding finding aids into electronic format, design a prototype finding aid database, and select hardware on which to mount a networked database of electronic finding aids. (For more information, see "[Completing the Chain.](#)")

--**Sharon Thibodeau**, chair of SAA's Committee on Archival Information Exchange, reported on the CAIE meeting of the previous day. She announced that CAIE had formed a Working Group on Format Integration and that CAIE and CART (Committee on Automated Records and Techniques) had formed a Joint Working Group on Metadata and Archives. She also announced that CAIE reviewed a draft of Lisa Weber's examination of SAA's current educational offerings in cataloging and description and that report will be forwarded to the Education Office Advisory Board after further review.

--**Victoria Walch**, a member of the SAA Standards Board, mentioned several items of interest to the description section that are slated to come before the board, including the NISTF (National Information Systems Task Force) Data Dictionary. She also announced that the handbook produced by the Working Group on Standards for Archival Description is completed in draft form and will be available in the fall.

--**Marion Matters** reported next on the Archival Information Systems Architecture project, which provides a model outline of information needed to manage an archives. The model is close to completion, and will soon be made available.

--**Kathleen Roe**, SAA's representative to the Bureau of Canadian Archives Committee on Descriptive Standards, reported on the standards work of that body, and announced that CAIE would be reviewing the BCA descriptive products. She brought examples of two new BCA manuals on authority control and indexing.

--**James Bowers** joined Kathleen to discuss the Archival Authority Project, a Bentley fellowship project they undertook with Marion Matters and Rich Szary. The team devised a model of the information content of archival authority data, such as information about people, organizations, and events.

--**Sarah Thomas** from the Library of Congress discussed changes in NUCMC, including the discontinuation of a printed NUCMC, development of a strategic plan, and limited LC processing of collections held at institutions with access to OCLC or RLIN.

--**Eliza Lanzi**, from the Art and Architecture Thesaurus, announced that the revised full set of the thesaurus would be available in February, 1994 in four different formats. AAT will also soon begin publishing a user newsletter and continue work on reconciling form and genre terminology from several sources.

--**Terry Snyder**, representing the Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries Name Authority Project reported that twenty institutions were participating, with over 10,000 names in the authority file. (See [NewsNotes](#))

--**Sharon Thibodeau** reported on developments at the National Archives and Records Administration. She concentrated on sharing information on the Archival Information Systems (AIS).

--**Richard Pearce-Moses**, SAA's representative to MARBI (Committee on Machine-Readable Bibliographic Information), reported on MARBI activities over the past year. Format integration, which will occur in stages in 1995, with the fixed fields first, was highlighted. He also mentioned that MARBI is continuing to discuss issues associated with multiple versions, faceted 655/654 fields, and local subdivisions for Library of Congress subject headings.

--**Elizabeth Yakel**, the section's Council liaison, briefly discussed the work of the Task Force on Roundtables and Sections and the Council's Open Forum on sections and roundtables later in the meeting. She also drew attention to SAA's strategic plan.

--**Sue Hodson**, the section's 1994 Program Committee liaison, discussed submitting proposals for the Indianapolis meeting. The theme of the meeting is "The Archival Core = Defining the Profession in an Electronic Age."

--**Barbara Teague** announced that incoming chair Tom Frusciano would be joined in the section leadership by incoming vice-chair Fred Honhart. New Steering Committee members are: J. Thomas Converse of the Inter-American Bank, Rebecca Johnson of the University of Delaware, Susan Potts McDonald of the Florida State Archives, Maxine Trost of the University of Wyoming, and Deborah Wythe of the Brooklyn Museum. These members join former chairs Barbara Teague, David Carmicheal, and Linda J. Evans on the steering committee.

--**David Carmicheal** will head a committee to look at revising Inventories and Registers: A Handbook of Techniques and Examples, issued by SAA in 1976. Barbara called for volunteers for this project. She also reported that the Finding Aids Fair had less than fifteen contributions, and asked any section member interested in taking charge of this to contact Tom Frusciano.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:00 a.m.

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## NewsNotes

The Rosenbach Museum and Library received \$26,310 in grants to catalog the Rush-Williams-Biddle Family Papers, an archive documenting the lives and careers of members of those prominent Philadelphia families. Comprising some 10,000 letters, business records, and other documents, the collection sheds light on the political, scientific, and social concerns of Americans from 1770 through 1919. The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, the Stockton Rush Bartol Foundation, and the Barra Foundation are supporting the project.

The papers begin with those of Dr. Benjamin Rush, the most famous physician of his day and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. The generations that followed him also had highly visible careers: the collection contains the papers of Richard Rush, a secretary of state and minister to France; documents recording the involvement of Nicholas Biddle and other family members with the Bank of the United States; the Civil War letters of Colonel Alexander Biddle; and the letters of Hugh Lenox Scott, from a frontier military outpost.

This remarkable archive was given to the Rosenbach in 1976 by Julia Rush Biddle (Mrs. T. Charlton) Henry (1886-1978), but financial constraints have prevented its complete processing. The grants are funding a full-time archivist to arrange and describe the papers. Computerized descriptions will be added to RLIN, the online database of the Research Libraries Group, and a detailed printed guide will be produced.

A portion of the funding also supports the planning stage of a major exhibition of documents from the collection. Preliminary work on the papers has revealed them as a rich and unexplored resource for the study of the social-historical role of woman in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Rosenbach hopes to present a public exhibit concentrating on the women of the family in 1994 or 1995.

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**Penn State.** Women's experiences at the university for more than a century are documented in a new reference volume, *A Guide To Materials on Women in The Pennsylvania State University Archives*. Kristen Turner, a graduate student in history, surveyed the entire holdings of the University Archives in order to identify manuscript collections and archival material created by women or related to women's experiences. Researchers from a variety of disciplines will find valuable resources here to expand the historical record of women's social, economic, political, and academic experiences.

The guide provides information on a wide variety of materials including 30 collections of papers created by women staff members, students, and faculty; records of 19 women's organizations; materials documenting women's sport and recreation teams at Penn State; additional manuscript collections containing accounts of women's experiences and institutional records that deal with issues concerning women in the University; biographical and professional data on women employees and alumnae; films; videos, and audio tapes by and about women, including recordings of guest lecturers, visiting artists, and special events; and description of the records of the Ogontz School, founded as a finishing school for young women in Philadelphia in 1850, located at the Ogontz Campus Library of Penn State in the Philadelphia suburbs. Appended information details general and picture vertical file folders and periodicals relating to women in the Archives as well as indexes and other finding aids available in the Archives. Copies of the guide on sale for \$10.95 plus postage. For more information call (814)865-7931, or write to the University Archives, C107 Pattee Library, University Park, PA 16802 or contact us by e-mail: LJS@PSULIAS.PSU.EDU.

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*Records of a Proud Profession*, a guide to the records on nursing in New York state held at the Foundation of the New York State Nurses Association Center for History, was published in May 1993. The guide describes the Foundation's archives program, and is designed to provide a port of entry into the rich and varied records on professional nursing held at the Foundation Center for History. Each Entry in the guide provides a title with inclusive dates, the volume of the records in linear feet, a brief historical note and a concise summary of the scope and contents, with emphasis on the types of records included. With the exception of the New York State Nurses Association (NYSNA) archival collection, each archival or manuscript collection has a single entry describing its records. Because of the volume and information contained in the NYSNA archival records, several entries are used to provide a more extensive description of this collection. An index provides additional subject access to the collections by linking topical terms and proper names to the descriptive entries.

The guide was produced as part of a project funded by the New York State Documentary Heritage Program to automate the descriptions of the Center for History's archival holdings. Minaret software was used to input data, format information to prepare descriptions for in-house finding aids, and prepare records for inclusion in RLIN and

OCLC. To prepare the guide, selected information was exported from Minaret into a word processor for additional formatting. *Records of a Proud Profession* can be obtained by writing the Foundation of the New York State Nurses Association, 2113 Western Ave., Guilderland, New York 12084, or calling 518-456-7858.

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*Enduring Images: A Guide to Photographic Records in the New York State Archives and Records Administration.* This guide describes about 70 series in the Archives that together contain over 500,000 images relating to New York State's people, government, history, health, education, natural history, and a variety of other subject areas. The guide describes still photographic images but does not include audio-visual materials such as motion picture film and videotape.

The images described in this guide date from the mid-19th century to the 1980s. Among them is a special collection of educational lantern slides used as instructional aids in public schools for over 50 years. This collection contains thousands of images relating to New York State as well as European and world history, sciences, and the arts.

The New York State Archives has also released its new *Guide to Records in the New York State Archives*. This 500-page volume will help researchers find what they are looking for among the over 100 million documents and 500,000 images that comprise the Archives' holdings. The Guide contains brief histories of each state government executive branch agency, the legislature, and the judiciary. Each history is followed by a series title list of records from that agency or other unit of government.

The records described in the *Guide* date from the 1630s to the 1990s and document the organization, functions, policies, and operations of New York's colonial and state governments. The records also document the lives of hundreds of thousands of individuals as they came into contact with state government, whether as a soldier in a Civil War regiment, an inmate in a state prison, juvenile facility, state school, or other state institution, a purchaser of land from the state, or in some other activity connected with state government.

The *Guide* is the culmination of years of work by Archives staff in identifying and describing, at least to the title-level, every series of records held by the Archives. The Guide was distributed free of charge to government, community, high school, and college and university libraries throughout New York State; to local historical societies, museums, and municipal historians; and to other state archives and the National Archives. Copies may also be purchased from the State Archives. For more information about the Guide, contact Judy Hohmann at 518-473-8037. For more information about the holdings of the New York State Archives, contact the Research Services Unit at 518-474-8955.

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The South Carolina Department of Archives and History received a \$100,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to develop an automated, series-level guide to its archival holdings. Through the project, the Department will produce an on-line catalog of series descriptions for over fourteen thousand cubic feet of paper records and thousands of rolls of microfilm of state and local government records spanning from 1671 through 1950. Agency and office histories will also be included.

The department is using Minaret Collections Management Software to set up its database and export the information to other networks such as RLIN an OCLC. In addition to records description, the Archives will gain better internal physical and intellectual control of its holdings as well as be able to generate printed publications and finding aids on various topics and agencies and local governments.

The Archives is also working with the South Carolina Historical Society and other South Carolina repositories to maintain consistency in application of indexing terms in order to eventually develop an application protocol and authority list for use by these institutions. To date project staff have completed draft descriptions of over 2500 county records series and office and agency histories, and they hope to send all local records descriptions to RLIN by June 1994. Descriptions for state records will then begin and be completed by the end of 1995. For further information, please contact Sharon Mackintosh at (803) 734-8604.

The Rockefeller Archive Center's new publication, *A Survey of Sources at the Rockefeller Archive Center for the Study of African-American History and Race Relations*, will be issued this fall by the Archives and the Indiana University Center on Philanthropy. This 200-page inventory of folders that document personal and corporate philanthropic support for African-American individuals and institutions was prepared by Archive Center staff members Ken Rose, Thomas Rosenbaum, Gretchen Koerpel, and Pecolia Allston-Rieder. Compilation of the survey was undertaken in conjunction with the conference "Philanthropy in the African-American Experience" sponsored by the Archive Center in the fall of 1992.

The survey highlights an important concentration of material documenting grant support for African-American education, most of it from the General Education Board. The entries also identify extensive amounts of material relating to grants by the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and members of the Rockefeller family, (especially John D. Rockefeller, Jr.) for the study and improvement of race relations and for the strengthening of charitable institutions.

In addition to the more than 2,200 entries, the survey includes a 30-page introduction by Rose and Rosenbaum. They observe that Rockefeller's early support of African-American institutions became a tradition within Rockefeller philanthropy, but that giving in this area never became a major emphasis of Rockefeller philanthropy. Nevertheless, they suggest, this philanthropy helped build an educated leadership in the African-American community, during the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, that helped plan and carry out the more public and confrontational civil rights activity that began in the 1950s.

The publication is available for \$12 from the Indiana University Center on Philanthropy, 550 West North Street, Suite 301, Indianapolis, IN 46202. (317) 274-4200.

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Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries (PACSCSL). Archivists, manuscript catalogers, and rare book catalogers in the Philadelphia area have long been interested in getting involved in name authority work, since so many of the names found in unique or rare materials have not been established in the shared Name Authority File (NAF) by the Library of Congress. The Philadelphia Authority File Cooperative (PAFC) was formed in 1987 to address this problem. Members met to discuss ways in which to deal with non-established headings with a view to later participation in the National Authority Cooperative Project (NACO) at the Library of Congress. NACO allows participating institutions to contribute name authority records directly into the NAF, as well as to change existing records in the file. PAFC members saw this as a wonderful opportunity to add many Philadelphia-area names to the national database.

Until NACO status could be obtained, it was decided that records would be entered in MARC format into a WordPerfect file. The file quickly grew until it contained approximately 6,000 personal and corporate name headings. It was sold and distributed in printout and floppy-disk formats to those who were interested all over the country.

In 1990, a three-year NHPRC grant to fund the current Authority Project was awarded to the Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries (PACSCSL), which included many of the original PAFC members. The NHPRC stipulated that the existing PAFC file be converted and loaded into RLIN, while new headings would be entered directly into NAF via both RLIN and OCLC after a coordinator was hired. Amy M. McColl was hired as the coordinator in May, 1991 to put the Authority Project in motion. After her initial NACO training at LC and individual training in RLIN and OCLC authority input techniques, the project began in earnest in July 1991.

Individual institutions began to make new contributions to the NAF almost immediately, and participation in the project has grown steadily in the last two years. Participants range in diversity from the Presbyterian Historical Society, to the Library Company of Philadelphia, to the College of Physicians of Philadelphia. Names entered strongly reflect Philadelphia-based people and organizations, but they are not limited to this area. As of Nov. 1993, over 11,000 new headings had been entered into the NAF by PACSCSL institutions. Although we will reach the end of the NHPRC

project in December 1993, it is hoped that the PACSCL Authority Project will continue in 1994 and beyond.

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## **ACLU records and electronic records receive attention**

Princeton University Archivist Ben Primer informs us his repository has received a grant of up to \$149,106 for a two-year project to establish a records management program for the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and to survey, arrange, and describe approximately 6,000 feet of archival records (ca. 1945-present) currently housed at Princeton and at ACLU headquarters in New York.

The project will arrange and describe all unbound (primarily post-1945) ACLU-related records (including collateral collections) currently at Princeton and at ACLU headquarters. The project will also establish an ongoing records management program for the ACLU. Princeton will establish retention schedules/forms for ACLU's national office and three regional offices and will do a brief survey of local affiliates to determine where their records are located. Princeton will also give the local affiliates information on establishing a relationship with a local repository if they have not already done so.

Princeton will hire two archivists (one with records management experience), one of whom will be retained by the ACLU as librarian/records manager/archivist at the end of the grant period, as well as one support staff person who will work in New York. The ACLU records are Princeton's most-used collection, Primer says, despite the fact that the records are currently unprocessed. In the last two years some 120 researchers have used the collection and ordered more than 8,000 pages of photocopying.

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Three significant electronic record series now have user friendly guides available from the New York State Archives. Each users guide incorporates five basic features to simplify access to the data: a technical requirement sheet summarizing the file structure, storage format, record count and hardware and software specifications; the historical development of the system which also describes the original uses for the data; a description of data collection methods; codebooks defining all data elements; file layouts illustrating the structure of each record.

**Inmate Case Records:** The Department of Correctional Services maintained a punch-card based inmate history information system from 1956-1973. The records describe each inmate in fine detail--citing the inmate's conviction status, sentence, prior convictions, psychiatric classification as well as the inmate's age, sex, education status, military status, religion, marital status, and drug addictions. Personal identifiers, such as name and social security number have been suppressed to insure privacy. The voluminous records--each annual file contains between 10,117 and 19,862 records--are stored on 18 reels of magnetic tape in IBM standard label EBCDIC. The Users' Guide provides the researcher with the standard technical and background information needed to access the data. It also guides the researcher through the number of structural and content changes made to record layouts over a twenty-year period and alerts the user to missing and invalid data that was not identified in the original documentation.

**The Grievance Tracking System** collected information on grievances and grieved disciplines from all New York State Executive branch agencies from 1984 to 1990. The 14 annual files are available in two formats: nine track magnetic tape in IBM standard label EBCDIC and 3.5" floppy discs in ASCII format. The Users' Guide describes the data collection method, illustrates the components of the database, and defines each data element utilized by the system. It also familiarizes the user with the contract and disciplinary procedures of New York State.

**Census data:** Though collected by the federal government, it is the states that have primary responsibility for providing census data to the public. The NY State Archives now holds the 1970 Housing and Population Summary Counts 1-6 for New York State. These are maintained in 14 rectangular files with hierarchical sort sequence. Each file contains actual population counts aggregated to geographic units such as county, town, tract, and block group. Many counts have multiple data files which represent various levels of geography. The Users Guide is actually an introduction to

the documentation produced by the US Census Bureau in 1970. It provides readers with the background information needed to access the original documentation which is complicated by the need to identify hundreds of tabulations, stratifiers, and data elements.

These users guides can be obtained by contacting the Research Services Unit, New York State Archives, 11D40, CEC, Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12230. 518-474-8955. The data sets themselves are available to the public at the cost of media reproduction.

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## **From the Chair**

These are really exciting times, especially in the realm of archival description. In reviewing this newsletter, I'm sure you will agree there's much happening out there. The information age has ushered in new ways of performing our tasks. From MARC AMD and VIM, loading finding aids and other indexes on local gopher client servers, to digitizing photographs and other primary source material, developing standard methods of encoding finding aids into electronic format and developing a database of finding aids--the way we do things is changing.

I also would welcome any communication from section members on how the section can best meet your specific needs. Vice-Chair Fred Honhart (Michigan State) and the steering committee members (listed in the minutes section elsewhere in this newsletter) stand ready to address issues of concern to the section.

*Tom Frusciano*  
1993-94 Description Section Chair

Send your submissions  
to our NEW ADDRESS:

Descriptive Notes  
Mudd Manuscript Library  
65 Olden Street  
Princeton, NJ 08544

DEADLINE: May 15, 1994

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## ***Archival frontiers***

### **Completing the chain: linking finding aids, catalogs, & source material**

The Berkeley Finding Aid Project is a collaborative endeavor to test the feasibility and desirability of developing an encoding standard for archive, museum, and library finding aids. Finding aids are documents used to describe, control, and provide access to collections of related materials. In the hierarchical structure of collection-level information access and navigation, finding aids reside between bibliographic records and the primary source materials. Bibliographic records lead to finding aids, and finding aids lead to primary source materials.

The Project will involve two interrelated activities. The first task will be to create a prototype encoding standard for finding aids. This prototype standard will be in the form of a Standard Generalized Markup Language (ISO 8879) Document Type Definition (SGML DTD). Researchers at the University of California, Berkeley will develop the encoding standard in collaboration with leading system design, network communication, authority control, and text retrieval and navigation. Project participants will analyze the structure and function of representative finding aids. The basic elements occurring in finding aids will be isolated and their logical interrelationships defined. The DTD will then be developed based on the results of this analysis.

Building a prototype database of finding aids is the second objective of the Project. Available hardware and software will be evaluated. Hardware and software will be selected to support the following basic tasks and functions:

- create finding aids marked according to Project defined DTD;
- create a database of finding aids on SGML aware server;
- TCP\IP based client-server communication;
- SGML aware client software for X-Windows/Motif, MicroSoft Windows and Macintosh

Client software must support display of a variety of graphic formats (TIFF, CGM, etc.). The client/server software should support a variety of search types: boolean keyword, word adjacency and proximity, and relevance ranking and feedback. The text viewing and navigation component of the client software should allow dynamic generation of an expandable table of contents adjacent to document text to supply context clues for reading comprehension and random, informed access to the text. Software should support hypermedia links between text and text and text and graphics.

The finding aid database will serve two primary purposes. First, it will provide the encoding standard developers with computer application experience with which to refine and inform the development process. Second, it will provide a means for end users to evaluate the utility and desirability of encoded finding aids that will enable them to provide new ideas and suggestions to the encoding standard developers. End users will include not only public users, but staff users as well. Optimally, while the test database server will reside in Berkeley, clients will be available at collaborating institutions.

The Berkeley Finding Aid Project envisions an information future in which serious scholars and the casually curious alike can easily isolate the cultural treasures they seek. In this information future, information seekers follow clearly marked paths through library catalogs to finding aids and from finding aids to treasures in a multitude of computer and traditional formats...and back.

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This section, Archival frontiers, is devoted to the discussion and dissemination of information about archival topics relating to new types of description activities. Submissions are highly encouraged and welcome.

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**WE'RE MOVING!!!!** Starting in 1994, *Descriptive Notes* is moving south. Our new address is below. *Descriptive Notes* is produced twice yearly, summer and winter. All submissions pertaining to archival description activities will be considered for publication. Editing for length may occur. Send your submissions to:

*Descriptive Notes*  
c/o Dan Linke  
Seeley Mudd Manuscript Library  
65 Olden Street  
Princeton, NJ 08544

**THE SUMMER 1994 ISSUE DEADLINE: MAY 15, 1994**

This issue was assembled with significant keyboard assistance from Lynn Rossini.

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