Descriptive Notes

The Newsletter of the Description Section of the Society of American Archivists   **Summer 1994**

NewsNotes

International work, the Internet, and Integration the focus of description funds, sweat, and years

A project to prepare a guide to **Catholic Diocesan Archives** in East Central Europe recently received a grant from the Special Projects in Library and Information Science program of IREX, the International Research and Exchanges Board, to support communications and travel. The project is coordinated by James P. Niessen, who is overseeing the work in Hungary and Romania; Kinga Perzynska of the Catholic Archives of Texas is overseeing the work in Poland; and Vladimir Kajlik of the University of Michigan and Wayne State University of overseeing the work in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The end result of the project will be a printed directory with basic repository and holdings information for the eighty dioceses in the target countries, and a database in CD-ROM or RLIN with multiple provenance/name/subject/language/date access points for the component collections. Please direct inquiries and comments to James P. Niessen/610 W. 30th Apt. 215/Austin, TX 78705 or e-mail: <jimn@ccwf.cc.utexas.edu>.

Approximately 75% of the holdings of the **State Historical Society of Wisconsin Archives Division** are now available for on-line searching via the Internet. Catalog descriptions of 13,000 Wisconsin state government agencies, state and local government record series, and manuscript collections are included now, and retrospective conversion will add another 2000 entries by Fall 1994. Current conversion work is funded by a Title IIC grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The Archives' on-line catalog is accessible through the University of Wisconsin library system's gopher. Choose "Wisconsin Library Catalogs," then "State Historical Society, Archives Division." You can also reach the catalog at the Telnet address "silo.adp.wisc.edu 5034." For reference assistance, contact the Archives Reference Section at 608-264-6460. For additional information, contact the automation archivist at 608-264-6453 or Karen.Baumann@mail.admin.wisc.edu.

The National Endowment of the Humanities (NEH) awarded the **Alabama Department of Archives and History** (ADAH) a $134,000 grant to process civil rights era material. The grant funds two staff positions that enable the department to process government records series and private manuscript collections relating to that turbulent era. Covering a period of thirty-one months, the award began in October 1993 and is scheduled for completion in May 1996.

 The collections that the department will arrange, describe, and preserve cover the period from the U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education decision to the end of George Wallace's third term in office in 1979. This material includes 615 cubic feet of state government archives consisting of the gubernatorial records of James E. Folsom (1955-1959), John Patterson (1959-1963), George C. Wallace (1963-1967 and 1971-1979), Lurleen B. Wallace (1967-1968), and Albert P. Brewer (1968-1971). The records of the State Sovereignty Commission will also be processed. The grant also includes 245 cubic feet of private manuscript collections housed at the ADAH. This material consists of the papers and artifacts of George Wallace, Cornelia Wallace, Sam Englehardt, and the Alabama State Democratic Executive Committee.

The **University of Texas at Austin** was the recipient in 1993 of a Title II-C grant from the U.S. Department of Education to catalog and preserve Mexican archives in the Benson Latin American Collection, a part of UT's General Libraries. By the end of the project, MARC-AMC records for 114 collections will have been created in OCLC; the records will also appear in UT's local online catalog, UTCAT, and on the National Information Service Corporation's CD-ROM product, "Latin American Studies." The collections being described document a range of Mexican historical, political, artistic, literary, and scholarly activities from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth century.

The staff of the **Byrd Polar Research Center Archival Program**, located on the campus of Ohio State University,

will present papers on the institution's manuscript collections to an international audience this summer. This program, which is the result of cooperation between the Byrd Polar Research Center and the University Archives, has the papers of Admiral Richard Byrd, a noted American polar explorer of the early Twentieth Century, as well as the papers of Sir George Hubert Wilkins, an Australian contemporary of Byrd. The program's archivists will be presenting papers on these collections at the Polar Libraries Colloquy which is to be held July 3-8 at the Scott Polar Research Institute at the University of Cambridge in England this summer. Raimund Goerler (University Archivist and Byrd Project Director) and Richard Hite (Byrd Project Archivist) will submit a paper dealing with the research potential of Byrd's papers. Kenneth Grossi (Assistant University Archivist and Wilkins Project Archivist) will deliver a paper on Wilkins's life and the value of his papers.

The **New York State Archives** announces the availability of its new Guide to Records Relating to the Revolutionary War. This finding aid describes about 75 series totaling nearly 120 cubic feet of records which provide researchers with a variety of information on the political and military conduct of the war in New York State. Records created by the Revolutionary and postwar-era State legislatures (and the British colonial council and governor), and high-level officials are particularly useful for research into the administration of state government during the Revolution and research on the long-term effects of the war on financial and land policy in the state. In addition, there is information on thousands of individual soldiers, although most of this information relates to payments and bounties received rather than to military service or personal history. Postwar records relating to the settlement of accounts, land bounty rights, and confiscations of loyalists' property illustrate the lasting effects of the war. Copies of the finding aid are available from Research Services, New York State Archives, Cultural Education Center, Room 11D40, Albany, NY 12230, phone (518) 474-8955

The **National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections** (NUCMC), a cooperative cataloging program operated by the Library of Congress, seeks to identify archives and manuscript repositories located in the United States and its territories which are open to the public and which lack the capability to catalog their collections in a national-level database such as RLIN or OCLC. On the basis of data supplied by such institutions to the NUCMC program, NUCMC catalogers create RLIN bibliographic records describing collections held by participants and establish pertinent name and subject authority headings free-of-charge. The NUCMC tapes are subsequently purchased and loaded by OCLC. Descriptions and locations of the material are then available to researchers on RLIN and OCLC. For more information on the program, contact NUCMC Team, Special Materials Cataloging Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540-4375 (telephone: (202)-707-7954; fax: (202)-707-6269; or Internet: nucmc@mail.loc.gov).

The **Collections:DC Project** is a cooperative venture between the District of Columbia Public Library, George Washington University (Special Collections, Gelman Library) and the Historical Society of Washington, D.C. The aim has been to describe primary research materials for the history of the Washington, D.C. area held in area repositories including libraries, universities, historical societies, churches and businesses. The database is housed on a PC, using software which supports MARC records and allows virtually any field to be indexed and searched. At some point the database will be loaded on the District of Columbia Public Library's CLSI online catalog. The database now holds almost 2000 records representing the holdings of approximately two hundred institutions. There is a new push to create a Collections:Beyond DC database for those materials of primary research interest held by institutions around the country. A full description of the initial project was published in Special Collections_V.4 #2 (1990). Matthew Gilmore. "Collections:DC--A Directory Database of Washington, D.C. Regional Primary Materials."

The **Rosenbach Auction and Book Dealer Catalog Archives** were completed in May 1993. A part of the Pew Initiative for the 1990's, this project is the culmination of a three-year effort to catalog and store the holdings of the Rosenbach and eight other member institutions of the Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries (PACSCL). Many of the Rosenbach's catalogs are annotated by Dr. Rosenbach himself, who kept a complete score of buyers and prices at every auction he attended. These records are invaluable to researchers investigating the social and economic history of book collections. Since the project was completed, the Rosenbach has received a steady stream of inquiries from scholars and book dealers, particularly concerning auction sales of large collections, wherein the archive has proven most useful.

The **Missouri State Archives**, under a two-year grant from the NHPRC, has begun cataloging its holdings. They are

experimenting with WordPerfect Informs as a cataloging worksheet. This "smart form" will allow them to prompt the archivists (many of whom are unfamiliar with the cataloging process) for information needed for a complete record. By purchasing a LAN version of Informs, several staff members can catalog simultaneously while still maintaining only one file as the official record. Editing can be done at any workstation, eliminating the bottlenecks that occur when only one machine is designated as the "record computer." The edited "data-ready worksheet" will then be downloaded into MicroMARC:amc as an addition to the data of record. The aim of the system is to enable archivists to create a record at the point of appraisal and/or accessioning and utilize the Informs option to produce full catalog records with limited redundancy in the work process.

From the Chair

The SAA Annual Meeting in Indianapolis is fast approaching. This year's meeting theme, "The Archival Core: Defining the Profession in the Information Age," is appropriate for members of the Description Section, and this year's gathering offers many sessions and workshops that relate directly to issues of description. In addition to the sessions, don't forget to attend the Description Section meeting on Thursday, September 8th at 8:00 a.m. This year, in addition to hearing reports from the various SAA liaisons and committee representatives, Daniel Pitti will present an extended overview and progress report on the Berkeley Finding Aids Project. (See the Winter 1993-94 issue of Descriptive Notes.) The Section will also elect a new Vice Chair/Chair-elect. (For more information on this see Help Wanted below.) I look forward to seeing everyone in Indianapolis.

Tom Frusciano
1993-94 Description Chair

Archival frontiers

Information conversion a breeze when using a Magician
 by Dan Cantrall

One of the most frustrating aspects of the profession's march toward MARC description may be that the tools necessary to accomplish the task are few, relatively outdated, and do not easily mesh with standard database systems such as Paradox, FoxPro, Filemaker Pro, and Oracle. In addition, MARC software created for the general library market often does not support AMC very well in either the variety of information required or the larger size of records encountered.

The Oregon State Archives uses Filemaker Pro on the Macintosh platform for its many database needs (and it seems that every other month we find a new way to use the database). Filemaker's greatest advantage is an extremely friendly user interface. It also requires practically no programming expertise to set up, is easily customizable, exports to industry standard formats, and is cross- platform compatible with a Windows version. Unfortunately, FilePro does not integrate with our MicroMARC software, and the latter is difficult to use.

An early experiment to bring these two data "worlds" together utilized the mail merge feature of our wordprocessing software. In this process, the information was entered into Filemaker and exported as a merge file. All the MARC field numbers and delimiters were hard-coded into a wordprocessing mail merge template that accepted "if, then" clauses, i.e., "if there's text in this field, put 520$ in front of that text." After the output was merged into a composite word processing document and saved as ASCII text, it was pasted screen by screen into MicroMARC using the software utility Outside In for DOS, though the header information still needed to be entered manually for each record. This was faster and more accurate than straight data entry into MicroMARC, but still was not the transparent, clean solution that one hopes for.

The solution came in the form of an inexpensive (around $300) DOS software program called The Data Magician. The program is targeted and marketed towards users of large library systems such as Inmagic, Library Master, and Procite, who need to convert one system's output to the system they are running. It is sold, marketed, and supported by Robert Folland, a software programmer, through his home-based business (Folland Software Services, 6 Chartwell Crescent, Guelph, Ontario N1G2T7 Telephone: 519-836-3453). Little time was needed to learn this capable program or customize it. The result is an almost "magical" transformation of our database data into the MARC format. Because the program also reads existing MARC files and converts the information back to traditional database format, this option lets us convert existing MicroMARC records back into the Filemaker database.

The Data Magician is a flexible program that allows for many combinations of input and output formats. We use Filemaker to export data to the Data Magician in DBF format, but practically any database--DOS or MAC--can export in the same way. In addition, Data Magician will read unconventional formats such as STAR and MARC Communications Format, and the user is presented with a multitude of data conversion possibilities. It allows for combining or breaking apart fields, adding text, performing field specific and global wildcard search and replace functions, conditional processing, letter case conversion, and many other features.

One of the export options of Data Magician is "MARC Communications Format." The program effectively solves the two major elusive links in former conversion solutions. It creates all the necessary leader information such as DCF, and allows for the proper input of 008 field character position data. Simply put, it allows one to set up fields in the Filemaker database that corresponded to the MARC field we use. The next step is to export the data from Filemaker in the DBF format. The advantage to this export option is that the Data Magician program automatically identifies and places DBF records. It also easily bypasses the traditional DBF 256 character limitation.

After importing data into the Data Magician, the program must be customized by entering processing codes for each field on both the input and output side. These codes may range from a simple code such as F 520 $a "descrip" (i.e., if there's data in the description field, put 520$a in front of it), to more complicated search and replace features. The manual supplied with the program gives many examples of conversions, and is quite detailed about the capabilities of the various conversion options. The file exported from Data Magician can be read by any MARC-based software program that has import capability as standard MARC Communications format. The inevitability of moving toward a unified MARC format will only require some minor re-coding of the program's processing codes. In other words, once the unified format standard is established we will be able to implement it quickly.

The Data Magician/Filemaker solution saves us much clerical time and provides a user friendly interface. Field information is entered once and reused throughout the MARC record and for other purposes such as finding aids and records retention schedules. Additional keystrokes are saved since the field tags and indicators are pre-programmed into the Data Magician. The end result is that we use fifty percent fewer keystrokes for each record than we used in MicroMARC and are able to easily reuse the data for other purposes.

I am presently providing consulting services for institutions interested in this solution. For more information contact Dan Cantrall, Oregon State Archives, 800 Summer St. NE, Salem, OR 97310 (503)373-0701 cantrall_daniel_e@oslmac.osl.or.gov

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. Endorsements of specific brand name products are the opinion of the authors and are not necessarily recommended by the Society of American Archivists.

Help Wanted

Vice-Chair/Chair Elect for Description Section
Dedicated, hard working individuals who desire to lead the Description Section during the 1994-96 term should contact Tom Frusciano at 908-932-7006. Elections for the position will be held at SAA's annual meeting in

Indianapolis. The Section Chair sets the agenda for SAA meetings, oversees the work of the wily section newsletter editor, and acts as a liaison with other section leaders when needed. Benefits include control of a "loosely structured section," receiving all the other sections' newsletters, and the chance that someone may buy you a beer at an SAA convention (though Tom reports no one has done so yet).

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:

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