

Descriptive Notes

The Newsletter of the Description Section of the Society of American Archivists Spring 1996

NewsNotes

Guides & Grants found from Coast to Coast

The University of Oklahoma's Carl Albert Center Congressional Archives released a very attractive guide to its collections. This guide provides detailed information about the Center's papers of former members of Congress, as well as its auxiliary collections. A description of the Center's photographic materials is also included. A topical index lists the broad range of subjects contained within these papers and reveals the importance of these collections for more than the study of politics and government. The guide also contains terrific photographs of people and ephemera from its holdings.

Among the Center's holdings are the papers of some distinguished officeholders: Carl Albert, Speaker of the House of Representatives during the Watergate scandal; Helen Gahagan Douglas, one of the most prominent women to serve in Congress during the 1940s; Robert S. Kerr, the uncrowned "King of the Senate" during the early 1960s; and Fred Harris, champion of the rights of minorities, especially Native Americans.

Copies of the guide are being distributed to hundreds of libraries and archives throughout the country. Anyone interested in obtaining a copy, at a nominal charge, should contact Todd Kosmerick or Judy Day at the Carl Albert Center, 630 Parrington Oval, Room 101, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK 73019-0375.

Award-winning township records guide

The Guide to the Archival Records and Manuscripts of the Town of Huntington, which won second place in the MARAC finding aid competition in 1995, is now available. It is a comprehensive study of the town's records. Through the efforts of Jo-Ann Raia, Town Clerk and Records Management Officer, this guide has made town records more accessible. It contains sufficient information to orient both scholarly researchers as well as the general public towards the town's history.

It contains a table of contents, reference information regarding the repository and its policies, a collective description of the record groups, a brief history and important dates of the Town of Huntington, descriptions of the repository's collections, and a select bibliography.

Ohio's Civil War guide project

Among the Northern states, Ohio was third behind New York and Pennsylvania in the number of men who served during the Civil War. Ohio was represented by artillery, cavalry, and infantry units. In addition, the 5th and 27th United States Colored Troops were made up primarily of Ohioans.

The Ohio Historical Society's Archives/Library Division possesses a vast collection of materials pertaining to the Civil War and Ohio's participation in the conflict. This collection includes regimental histories and studies of tactics; publications regarding individual battles and campaigns; books on equipment including firearms and uniforms; newspapers; periodicals; manuscript letters, diaries, battle reports, and artwork; State of Ohio Adjutant General material including draft records, recruiting officers' records, regimental records, officers' records, militia and National Guard records, prisoner of war records, and Surgeon General records; Ohio Secretary of State record series pertaining

to the soldiers' vote in the 1864 presidential election; and photographs including group shots and cartes de visite, and battle flags.

The Archives/Library Division's collection contains materials relating to the many battles and campaigns, as well as the everyday life of the Civil War soldier. While professors, students, genealogists, and general researchers have long made extensive use of these Civil War materials, the popularity of Ken Burns's "The Civil War" and the movie "Gettysburg" (based on the novel *Killer Angels* by Michael Shaara) has heightened interest in America's bloodiest conflict.

The Archives/Library Division has undertaken a long term project to compile a comprehensive list of the Civil War materials in its collections. Using the WordPerfect and dBASE computer programs, bibliographic entries will be created for each book, pamphlet, special press newspaper, periodical, manuscript collection, government record, and photographic collection. Each entry will have the following fields: Item Number, Type, Author, Title, Place, Publisher, Date, Battle/Campaign, Unit, Comments, Subjects, and Call Number. In the "Comments" field, material of potential interest to the social historian will be noted. Indexes will be generated by subject, name, battle/campaign, and unit. Maximum access to, and dissemination of, the information in the database is a primary goal of the project, and a wide range of software will be examined to achieve this goal. For more information, contact: Gary Arnold, Civil War Guide Project, 614-297 2586.

NHPRC Grant for Western History Catalog

In 1992 the American Heritage Center of the University of Wyoming received a grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission to conduct a retrospective cataloging project of the AHC's western history collections. The project was completed in April 1995.

In addition to producing more than 1600 OCLC and CARL (Colorado Alliance of Research Library) records and evaluating more than 8300 collections, the project has also had a number of other benefits. Three guides to collections have been completed using the entries written by the catalogers for the scope and content note (520), and the history or biography (545), MARC cataloging fields. These two fields and title information were saved in GENCAT files (Software from Eloquent Systems). By using keyword searching and indexing capabilities and a macro command to create title, content, introduction and index pages, customized guides can be created within minutes to answer specific on-demand research inquiries. Entries for each of the collections contains the name, title, dates, accession number, size and a description of the collection.

Guides to the AHC's popular arts, politics and world affairs, Wyoming and western history, and transportation collections will be completed by the end of 1995.

Copies of the Guide to Women's History Resources, Guide to Environmental and Natural Resource Collections and Guide to the International Archive of Economic Geology Collections can be purchased for \$5 plus \$1.50 shipping and handling from the American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming, P.O. Box 3924, Laramie, WY 82071. Phone: (307) 766 4114; Fax (307) 766 5511; E-mail: Mamalone@uwyo.edu

Spanish Catholic Archives

Guide to the Spanish and Mexican Manuscript Collection at the Catholic Archives of Texas (Catholic Archives of Texas: Austin, 1994) compiled by Dedra S. McDonald and edited by Kinga Perzynska is the final product of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission funded project to preserve and describe the Spanish and Mexican manuscript collection created by the Texas Knights of Columbus Historical Commission for the writing of Our Catholic Heritage in Texas by Carlos Castaneda in 1936 1958 and stored at CAT in Austin.

The bulk of the collection consists of photocopies of records held in archival repositories in Spain and Mexico, including the Archivo General de Indias in Seville, Spain and the Archivo General de Mexico in Mexico City, and

archives in Queretaro, Guadalajara, Zacatecas and Ciudad Juarez. Original records in the collection include over 800 documents from Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe del Paso del Rio del Norte, today known as the Juarez Cathedral in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico. Rare documents in the collection include a 1663 Papal Bull concerning the establishment of Jesuit missions and missionary colleges in Puebla de los Angeles, today's Puebla, Mexico. The collection also contains original correspondence and records from late Spanish Texas through the Mexican Texas period, notably a letter written by Augustin de Iturbide in 1821 and an emancipation certificate for a slave family in Missouri Territory, 1813. The guide makes available to researchers primary and often rare documents on the military, political, and religious history of Texas and the Southwest from 1519 to 1890. The guide is free to institutions. Individual orders send \$10.00 (for shipping and handling costs) to Kinga Perzynska, Catholic Archives of Texas, P.O. Box 13327 Capitol Station, Austin, TX 78711, ph: (512) 476-4888.

Guide to Florida Women's History Collections

The Florida State Archives is expanding its efforts to document the history of women in Florida. In August 1995, the Archives opened an exhibit marking the 75th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th amendment ensuring American women the right to vote, and Archives staff are identifying and contacting individual women and women's organizations to locate potential sources of materials and are appraising and acquiring manuscripts and other materials documenting women's history and women's issues. In addition, Archivist Krista Kordt has recently prepared a descriptive guide to women's history resources currently in the Archives. The guide places collections in broad categories such as women's rights, health issues, and women's organizations and clubs. It describes both state government records and manuscript collections. The guide also provides research tips and other potential sources of information at the Archives. The final guide includes descriptions of recently acquired collections as well as photographs of selected documents. For more information, contact Krista Kordt, Archivist, Florida Department of State, Bureau of Archives and Records Management, Mail Station 9A, Tallahassee, FL 32399 0250; (904) 487 2073; or e-mail: kkordt@dlis.state.fl.us.

Processing of Admiral Byrd's Papers Completed

The processing of the papers of the polar explorer Admiral Richard E. Byrd has been completed. This collection is housed in a new facility that the Ohio State University Archives moved into in the summer of 1995. The Byrd papers consist of a total of 523 cubic feet of material, including photographs, films, audio tapes, record albums, and artifacts in addition to manuscript material. Project Archivist Richard Hite, graduate assistant Robert Matuozi, and several Ohio State students have prepared a finding aid to the collection that is 617 pages in length. This includes a comprehensive index of 154 pages.

The papers span Byrd's entire lifetime (1888-1957) and include some materials produced by family members after his death, but the majority of the documentation covers his years as a polar explorer. He began his explorations in the Arctic regions in 1925, but from 1928 until his death, he focused on Antarctica. Byrd commanded five expeditions to Antarctica, the first two privately financed and the last three government funded. In 1926, he was credited with being the first person to fly over the North Pole and this was his springboard to fame. In 1929, he and three members of his first Antarctic expedition became the first ones to fly over the South Pole.

Antebellum subject access

In March 1995, at the invitation of Peter Wilkerson of the South Carolina Historical Society, representatives from nine archival and manuscript repositories in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia met in Charleston, South Carolina, to discuss the issue of subject access pertaining to the development of Civil War and antebellum subject terms. Institutions represented included state and private universities, historical societies, and specialized research centers. At the meeting it was decided to combine several existing local lists of protocols into a master list, which would then be distributed first to attendees and then to the archival community at large.

The group, which named itself subjectSouth: Southern Working Group on Subject Access, met on March 13, 1996 and decided to load the list onto the University of Virginia Website for public review. Discussion about the terms will take place on the LCSH-AMC listserv. The group hopes to receive feedback from the cataloging world, but state that they hope to produce a compendium of practice, not re-write the LCSH red books. The intent behind the sharing of the list is to foster discussion among users of LC subject headings and to assist catalogers in applying and/or adapting book-based subject terminology and practices to archival and manuscript materials.

Participating institutions to date include South Carolina Historical Society, Duke University, UNC-Chapel Hill, University of Virginia, College of William and Mary, and the Virginia Historical Society. The Library of Congress Cooperative Cataloging Office also sends a representative to these meetings. Contact Eileen Parris for more information: 804-342-9675 or EPARRIS@LEO.VSLA.EDU

From the chair

The future calls; how will you serve?

According to Bill Gates in his new book *The Road Ahead*, we will be entering the information age within the next two decades. For many years, indeed many centuries, archivists have worked with paper records. Only in the last few years have we begun to recognize the importance of the computer in our work. We produce our inventories more efficiently with a word processor than a typewriter. We recognize that we must find a way to preserve computer records for this future. We catalog our collections online but rely on inventories in a drawer.

As the world plunges headlong into cyberspace, archivists have a rare opportunity to become the high priests of the information age. Many among us are working on new ways of describing and presenting our information. We are on the World Wide Web making information available beyond our reading room tables. We are developing standard markup languages to provide more information about our information. We are looking for ways to make computer databases with non-sequential information intelligible to future scholars.

The Description Section can take a leading role in looking for new methods and techniques. We can provide a forum for sharing information about what is happening in archives around the country. We can encourage research and writing about the challenges and opportunities that we face. We can develop programs and methods of delivering information to our colleagues.

The Description Section, with more than 400 members, has the talent and numbers to lead the charge into the new age. Your ideas and energy are wanted. Would you like to work on an innovative finding aids fair in San Diego? Would you like to contribute information or track down creative projects for a Web Page? Would you like to serve on the section steering committee and contribute ideas for our future? Would you like to develop programs for SAA meetings? Please call me and tell me where you would like the Description Section to go and how you can help get it there. Call 307-766-6823; FAX: 307-766-5511; write American Heritage Center, PO Box 3924, Laramie, WY 82071; or, as Bill Gates would prefer it, e-mail Maxine@uwyo.edu

Maxine Trost

Chair, Description Section

Food for Thought

Reflections on MARC: And My Cookies

by F. Holly Hodges

Some libraries buy their chocolate chip cookies and catalog cards already made, store bought so to speak. Others buy chocolate chip cookie dough from the refrigerated section, taking it home to bake. Yet another library may make their chocolate chip cookies and catalogue cards from a mix, in order to acquire more of that home made taste. There are even some who bake chocolate chip cookies from scratch. There are popular recipes Hillary's, Barbara's, Betty Crocker's, and in my case, grandma's.

Cataloguing is much the same. A library can buy catalogue cards pre made ("Store-bought") at the time of a book's purchase. Or they can buy it partly made and finish it themselves. Whether a library buys packages of cards from a vendor or copies records from bibliographic databases and customizes them for its own catalogue is a matter of balancing resources of time and money, just as homemakers do when making chocolate chip cookies.

When cataloguing manuscript collections, a cataloguer cannot copy another record -- a manuscript collection is unique and like no one else's. The cookies must be baked from scratch. Not only that, but not everyone's recipe is exactly the same. But most agree that certain things remain the same -- chocolate chip cookies must be cookies with chocolate chips.

A MARC:AMC record and the chocolate chip cookie have several important aspects in common -- both rely heavily on detail for flavor. A chocolate chip can go far in providing flavor for chocolate chip cookie, however, one can go too far in adding chocolate chips to a cookie. If one were to go to an extreme and add a lot of chocolate chips without adding enough cookie dough to hold it together, one would have a mess of chocolate chips. The dough is the critical part for holding the cookie together (historical context); it unifies the cookie into a single edible entity. Chocolate chips in themselves cannot make a chocolate chip cookie, any more than details can make a MARC:AMC record by themselves. It needs dough, or context (a.k.a., the "big picture") to hold it together. A common accusation is that the broad general scope really doesn't add very much to the MARC:AMC record. This may be true as cookie dough in itself cannot make a chocolate chip cookie -- it simply can't.

For some people the ultimate cookie is the toll house cookie -- a cookie with large chocolate chip on top. Most people recognize it for what it is -- a particular kind of chocolate chip cookie. Another popular cookie is the cookie with raisins or a cookie with nuts along with chocolate chips. Again, most people recognize it for what it is -- a very pleasant variation on the chocolate chip cookie. A cookie can still be a chocolate chip cookie if it has only a few chocolate chips. Such a cookie just lacks an abundance of that particular flavor that so many of us crave. Such a record would also lack the flavor that researchers like to taste. A chocolate chip cookie that has a lot of chocolate chips is always going to be popular. Everyone's idea of the perfect chocolate chip cookie varies. There have been numerous contests conducted and votes taken to get a definite fix on the ultimate chocolate chip cookie. Such a cookie cannot exist as long as everyone has different palates. Every historian is looking for different details; each has his own "Take" on ideas. But even when a researcher is offered a chocolate chip cookie that is not made from his Grandma's recipe, he is not likely to refuse it. But he will expect it to be held together with cookie dough. If he didn't feel that the cookie part were necessary, he would simply buy a bag of chocolate chips. Any index can do that.

A chocolate detail may be standard (the traditional historical detail has been political/military), mint chocolate (Sociological), white chocolate (cultural), or raspberry chocolate (educational). The list is limited only by one's imagination. Cookie dough, or historical context, can have the same variety. Whether the collection's context is primarily all purpose white flour (traditional political/military), whole wheat flour (Sociological), rice flour (Women's history), rye flour (Cultural), or any combination of these, it still needs a context to hold it together.

In shortening, manuscript catalogers each have their own recipe for chocolate chip cookies. Unlike copy catalogers, who can buy their cookies prepackaged from a library processing company, or from Library of Congress, and simply attach their own label to it, manuscript catalogers must make their cookies from scratch. Some like to add their own special ingredient. One may put in a little extra flour, or use whole wheat instead of all purpose white, or a combination of the two. Some may use only white sugar, others only brown sugar. Some use a bit of both. The kinds of shortening changes the consistency. But whether one makes the cookie crunchy or chewy, it is still a chocolate chip cookie if one puts chocolate chips in it. MARC:AMC is flexible enough to allow for each institution to add its own special ingredient, if desired, but I hope we are all still making chocolate chip cookies.

Holly Hodges recently completed a manuscripts reconversion project at the University of Virginia. She now works at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. She is working on an article entitled "How Format Integration converted me from titular atheism to titular agnosticism."

From the Editor

Where did 1995 go?

For those of you wondering--"Did I get dropped from the Description Section newsletter mailing list?"-- the answer is an emphatic "No." Between my preoccupation with the purchase of my first house and the dearth of copy in my stories file, I produced no issues of Descriptive Notes in 1995. With this issue, I am running all the stories that have been sent to me since the last issue of the newsletter (Winter 1994-1995) was issued well over a year ago. The stories file and my bank account resemble one another now--empty, or close to it. I have also tapped dry all my friends around the archival world who had previously submitted items (though I have not hit any up for cash--yet). With your help, I will try to resume publishing the newsletter twice yearly and appreciate your contributions. Please send your reports on description activities to:

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THE FALL 1996 ISSUE DEADLINE:
September 15, 1996

This issue was assembled with significant keyboard assistance from Alison McCuaig.

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