Descriptive Notes

The Newsletter of the Description Section of the Society of American Archivists   **Fall 1998**

From the New Chair   Rob Spindler

Greetings! Welcome to another exciting year of Description Section (DS) activities! This is a very important year for DS and I hope all our members will take an active interest in section events and activities.

Section is in the midst of profound changes this year as it responds to changes in the SAA organizational structure resulting from the Task Force on Organizational Effectiveness recommendations. Given the changes in the scope of the new Standards Committee and particularly the narrow focus of the Technical Subcommittee on Descriptive Standards (formerly known as the Committee on Archival Information Exchange - CAIE), our section has a wonderful opportunity to broaden its responsibilities and play a more central role in meeting your professional development needs and furthering the goals of SAA. DS has already absorbed the principal responsibility for creating description-related program proposals and submitted two proposals (both of which were nominated during the section meeting at Orlando). Two other proposals were submitted by other individuals or SAA units and endorsed by DS. I hope that future section chairs will have the luxury of enthusiastic steering committee members like Susan Hamburger, who worked hard to finalize the language on our proposals and submit them to Program Committee on time. Please be sure to come to DS next fall with more program ideas and ensure the SAA 2000 program will have substantial description-related content.

Another DS event that is being revitalized is the Finding Aids Fair. Vice-chair Holly Hodges is coordinating plans for the 1999 fair with representatives of the Reference and Outreach Section and she can use your help organizing, staffing the table and sending example finding aids. We hope to have SAA support for computing facilities at Pittsburgh so let your imaginations run wild with the electronic or hardcopy finding aids you can share with your colleagues, and contact Holly to volunteer or get additional information.

Ongoing section programs include the DS web site and the DS newsletter, both of which are important sources of information for our members. Nevertheless, those publications are only as good as the content you put in them! Please be sure and send Ann Hodges at the newsletter and Nicole Bouché or Diana Smith at the web site the news of your outstanding description accomplishments. Consider a brief article about description issues that concern you. Here's your chance to celebrate and reflect on description with a captive and specialized audience!

Finally, I need to emphasize and recognize the important work that Heather Heywood, Bill Landis and I have done in drafting a new set of section bylaws. The latest draft is published here in the newsletter and on the web site, and I implore you to read the documents carefully and send your comments to me. The document will be revised to reflect your concerns and will be voted on at the section meeting next fall. In addition the bylaws establish a formal elections process and a number of appointed positions, so, as you review the bylaws, please consider running for Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect next fall or volunteering to serve in other capacities as opportunities for newsletter editor or "at-large" steering committee members arise. Please contact Holly or me if you're interested in working for DS.

Finally, I'd like to thank Heather Heywood for her outstanding service as chair over the last two years and for her continuing assistance in editing and finalizing the section bylaws. I only hope that I can match her dedication and enthusiasm, as well as your expectations for me, in the coming year.

As you can see, Description Section is bursting with opportunities for you to make a difference for yourself and your descriptive colleagues. I have been rewarded manyfold for the times I have served SAA, and I know section service can be an enjoyable and rewarding experience for you, too. Now is a great time to take a chance and get involved!

Minutes of the 1998 Description Section Meeting

The Description Section met during the SAA Annual Meeting in Orlando, Florida, on Thursday 3 September 1998. Approximately 60 people attended the meeting. The Chair, Heather Heywood, called the meeting to order at 10:30 am.

I. Reports from SAA Committees and SAA Representatives

1. CAIE/TSDS (Committee on Archival Information Exchange/Technical Subcommittee on Descriptive Standards) - Kris Kiesling, Chair

Kris Kiesling reported that CAIE had spent last year reconfiguring itself in accordance with the recommendations of the Task Force on Organizational Effectiveness (TFOE). The SAA Standards Board has become the SAA Standards Committee, and CAIE has become a subcommittee of this Standards Committee, and is called the Technical Subcommittee on Descriptive Standards (TSDS). The charge for TSDS is similar to the charge of the former CAIE and states that TSDS is "responsible for developing, maintaining, monitoring, and promulgating standards used by archivists to describe their holdings. This includes descriptive standards developed within the SAA as well as those developed outside the archival community." (The full charge and bylaws can be found on the Description Section web site.)

TSDS consists of six appointed members. Kris introduced the members for 1998-1999 as Bill Landis (Chair), Donna di Michele, Susan McDonald, Dennis Meissner, Nicole Bouché, and Alden Monroe.

Work programme items for TSDS for the coming year include preparing comments on ISAD(G) and revising MARBI proposal 97-7 (regarding leader/06 and leader/08).

Kris also reported on the work of the EAD Working Group (a working group of CAIE/TSDS). EAD Version 1.0 was released at the end of August 1998, and the tag library has been published. The Working Group hopes to secure funding to revise the application guidelines (originally prepared for the beta version of EAD), with completion scheduled for Spring 1999. (A fuller report on the activities of the EAD Working Group can be found on the Description Section web site.)

2. OCLC (Online Computer Library Center) - Susan Westberg

Susan reported that many internal changes had occurred at OCLC over the past year, including the appointment of Jay Jordan as new CEO. OCLC also received ISO 9001 certification in July 1998. Other internal activities were related to making processes and products Year-2000 compliant.

Susan announced three new services or product changes that may interest the archival community.

(a) The Dewey Cutter Macro is now available on the OCLC Product Services Web page. (b) Changes to the OCLC-MARC bibliographic format will be implemented in late October 1998. These changes result from changes announced by the Library of Congress. (c) Type Codes can now be changed by users. OCLC Passport software users can change the Type Code on all unlocked or locally edited bibliographic records. CONSER users can change master records.

A fuller report from Susan is available on the Description Section web site at http://www.library.yale.edu/~dsmith/saa/descrip.htm#Reports from SAA Liaisons.

For more information on OCLC activities and products, visit the OCLC web site at www.oclc.org.

3. CC:DA (ALA Committee on Cataloguing: Description and Access) - Michael Fox

Michael reported that CC:DA had broadened the focus of its work this year beyond AACR2 to include other description- and access-related standards such as the Dublin Core and metadata standards. He was optimistic that this

larger scope could make the work of the committee more relevant to archivists.

Michael was involved in two special working groups over the past year.

(a) Cataloguing from Metadata Task Force: This task force initially concentrated on the value of TEI headers and Dublin Core metadata as a source of cataloguing, but concluded that it needed to broaden its charge to look at other ways that metadata can be used for description. The task force has informally joined MARBI to form a Task Force on Metadata to monitor metadata developments and their potential impact on library cataloguing. Michael used his membership on this Task Force as an opportunity to introduce librarians to EAD and to talk about the archival community's needs for description and access.

(b) Rule 0.24 Revision Task Force: This task force is considering the "content vs. carrier" debate, which has largely been driven by the need to deal with electronic records and traditional records in electronic format. Ultimately, cataloguing rules such as AACR2 may need to be restructured to shift the emphasis from format to intellectual content. Archivists will need to think about the terms we use to describe our materials (e.g., definitions of "archival" and "manuscript"). Changes to the way that materials are categorized will affect the appearance and presentation of descriptive records in online catalogues, and will affect how OCLC and local catalogues organize the records in their databases. Further information about the Rule 0.24 Revision Task Force can be found on the web at www.libraries.psu.edu/iasweb/personal/jca/ccda/tf-024a.html.

4. MARBI (US MARC Advisory Board) - Rudy Witthus

Rudy reported that much of the past year was spent on aligning the USMARC and CANMARC formats.

One new development was that the 856 linking field has been extended to the authorities format. The field can be used to link an authority record to a corporate web site or to an administrative history or scope and content note in an archival description. The intention is to improve access to information about the entity covered by the authority record.

5. Coker Award - Alexandra Gressitt

Alexandra reported that there were only four nominations for the 1998 Coker Award. She indicated that there was a need to raise professional awareness about the award and encouraged Description Section members to make nominations. Information about the Coker Award, and criteria for nominations, are on both the SAA web site and the Description Section web site.

II. Section Reports

1. Descriptive Notes newsletter - Ann Hodges

Ann Hodges, the newsletter editor, appealed for feedback on and submissions to *Descriptive Notes*. Do members find the current focus on reports of grant projects useful? What kind of information do members want in the newsletter? What should go into the newsletter and what should go on the Section web site?

There was no reaction from the members present at the meeting. However, suggestions, comments, and submissions may be directed to the editor at any time.

2. Section web site

The Description Section web site was launched in December 1997. It is maintained by the Manuscript Unit, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. The chair especially thanked Nicole Bouché and Diana Smith for their work in mounting the site.

Tim Young reported on the web site for Diana Smith. He listed the features of the web site, which include: current and past issues of Descriptive Notes, section charge and bylaws, section leadership, membership information, a link to

the SAA page regarding the Coker Award, and information about the section's annual meetings. Other sections that need to be expanded include continuing education opportunities, sites of related interest, and late breaking news/current events. Tim asked for feedback on the site, and on whether section members found it a useful place to look for information on the section and description-related issues.

Comments and suggestions can be directed to Diana Smith at diana.smith@yale.edu.

3. Finding Aids Fair

The Chair reported that a small Finding Aids Fair had been organized for this year's SAA Annual Meeting. It would take place on Friday 4 September 1998 from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm in Exhibit Hall B, Booth 3. The theme for the FAF this year was a retrospective of Coker Award winners, from the first winner in 1984 up to and including the 1998 winner. Kris Kiesling and Michael Fox would also be providing demonstrations of EAD.

III. Section Mission Statement and Bylaws

Following some discussion at last year's Annual Meeting about the need for bylaws for the section, the Section Steering Committee worked with two volunteers from CAIE (Bill Landis and Rob Spindler) to draft a mission statement and bylaws. The Chair circulated copies of the draft bylaws and reviewed the main points of the document during the meeting. Some questions and suggestions were raised from the floor. The bylaws will be revised in the light of these comments and distributed to all members of the Description Section via the Fall issue of *Descriptive Notes*. They will also be available on the section web site. Comments will be accepted by the Steering Committee until the end of January or February 1999, after which point the bylaws will be further revised if necessary. The final version of the bylaws will be mailed to all members in Spring 1999, with a mail-in ballot for voting approval of the document.

IV. Proposals

1. Publication proposals

Jackie Dooley, Chair of the SAA Publications Board, has asked SAA committees, sections, and roundtables to develop a list of their top three to five publication priorities in the area of their unit's particular interests.

Kris Kiesling reported that the two upcoming issues of American Archivist are devoted to EAD, and that these two issues will be reformatted into a monograph early in 1999 and marketed internationally. The EAD Tag Library has already been published and is available through SAA. The Library of Congress Catalog Distribution Service has agreed to help advertise the availability of EAD documentation so that information about EAD will reach a wider audience than could be accomplished solely through the SAA publications catalogue. The application guidelines will also be published by SAA when they have been revised.

No other suggestions about publication priorities were received from the floor.

2. 1999 Session proposals

The theme for next year's SAA Annual Meeting is "Meeting the Challenge of Contemporary Records." There will be a plenary session at the beginning of each day to set the theme for the day. Day One will focus on records creation; Day Two will be on preservation of records; and Day Three will address access and use of records.

A few suggestions were raised from the floor, including: - how current events affect description priorities (e.g., Nazi gold, tobacco) - a yearly session on best practices (e.g., how are people handling new developments such as MARC changes; how are people on the cutting edge actually implementing new practices) - standards for the creation of finding aids (e.g., content standards, presentation standards) - use of controlled vocabulary for access (are archivists

using LCSH; how are users getting access to descriptive records?)

The new Section Steering Committee will follow up on several of these proposals. It was suggested that proposals that are not accepted by the SAA Program Committee be considered for presentation during the Description Section Annual Meeting.

V. New Steering Committee

The Chair introduced the 1998-1999 Steering Committee.

Chair: Rob Spindler; Vice-chair/Chair-elect: Holly Hodges; Newsletter editor: Ann Hodges; "At large" members: Susan Hamburger and Kathleen Dow.

Heather Heywood

Draft Bylaws

Society of American Archivists Description Section

I. Purpose

The SAA Description Section provides a forum for the exchange of information and ideas about all aspects of archival description among those responsible for, involved in, or interested in description projects, descriptive standards, and descriptive systems. The Section represents and promotes the interests and concerns of these archivists to the rest of SAA, and may undertake activities as appropriate to promote awareness of descriptive issues within the SAA and externally.

II. Membership

Membership in the Description Section is open to any member of the Society of American Archivists (SAA) with an interest in archival description, descriptive standards, or descriptive systems.

III. Steering Committee

1. The Section shall have a Steering Committee composed of three members: chair, vice-chair, and newsletter editor. In addition, Òat largeÓ members may be appointed by the chair as necessary to assist in carrying out the SectionÕs work programme. The chair of SAAÕs Technical Subcommittee on Descriptive Standards (TSDS) serves as an ex officio member.

2. Only full members of the Description Section may serve as officers. The Society maintains the official list of Section members.

3. The chair serves a one-year term and is succeeded by the vice-chair. The vice-chair/chair-elect shall be elected annually at the SectionÕs meeting during the SAA Annual Meeting.

4. The newsletter editor shall be appointed by the Section chair based on nominations submitted to the Steering Committee.

5. ÒAt largeÓ members shall be appointed as necessary by the Section chair based on nominations submitted to the Steering Committee.

6. The chair may appoint and disband committees or working groups as needed for specific purposes. The size, duration, and terms of reference of these groups will be determined by the Steering Committee.

IV. Duties and responsibilities

1. The chair shall organize and preside at all meetings of the Section and of its Steering Committee. In addition, the chair shall serve as liaison with the SAA in general, its Council, and other Sections and Roundtables, and serve as ex officio member of the Technical Subcommittee on Descriptive Standards (TSDS). The chair shall report to the Section membership, the SAA Council, and the SAA membership on such matters as deemed pertinent or as identified by the Steering Committee.

2. The vice-chair shall arrange and preside at meetings of the Section and of its Steering Committee in the chairÕs absence or inability to serve. The vice-chair shall also be responsible for organizing the SectionÕs annual Finding Aids Fair.

3. The newsletter editor is responsible for preparing the SectionÕs newsletter and any other special issues or mailings as determined by the Steering Committee. The editor negotiates all newsletter matters with the SAA Office as appropriate and is responsible for submitting notices about Section news to *Archival Outlook.* The newsletter editor is also responsible for ensuring that the information on the SectionÕs web site is current and accurate.

4. "At large" members will be assigned specific responsibilities by the chair.

5. Annually, the chair will ensure that at least one Steering Committee member is responsible for coordinating the submission of session proposals to the SAA Program Committee on behalf of the Section.

V. Nominations and elections

1. The chair and/or persons appointed by the chair shall be responsible for soliciting candidates for the vice-chair position.

2. Nominees shall be solicited through a notice in the newsletter, by personal contact, and by electronic communication as appropriate (e.g., listservs; Section web site). All candidates for election must be full members of the SAA and of the Section.

3. The slate of candidates shall be publicized in the Section newsletter in the issue immediately preceding the SectionÕs annual meeting, or in a special mailing immediately preceding the Section's annual meeting.

4. Election of the vice-chair shall take place at the SectionÕs meeting during the SAA Annual Meeting. All members of the Section may vote. Voting at the annual meeting shall be by secret ballot. Members of the Section who will not be able to attend the annual meeting may request an absentee ballot; all absentee ballots must be returned to the chair one week prior to the annual meeting.

5. The candidate with the highest number of votes received shall be elected. The vice-chair shall be responsible for tabulating and announcing the results of the election during the annual meeting. The out-going chair shall be responsible for casting a tie-breaking vote, if necessary.

6. In the event that the vice-chair cannot succeed to the office of the chair, a new chair will be elected using the

same procedures as for the election of the vice-chair.

7. In the event that the chair must relinquish his/her office during the year, the vice-chair will succeed to the office of the chair. The vice-chair will not be replaced until the regular election at the annual meeting.

VI. Meetings/Communication

1. The Section shall meet annually at the time and place of the SAA Annual Meeting, at a time determined by the SAA Program Committee.

2. The Steering Committee shall meet after the annual Section meeting to review the meeting and to plan for the coming year.

3. Outside of the annual meeting, the Steering Committee shall maintain contact to carry out its work program through e-mail, telephone, mail, and fax.

4. Communication with Section membership and SAA membership shall be effected through reports in the SectionÕs newsletter, Archival Outlook, and/or electronic communication (such as a web site or listserv).

5. The Section cannot make official statements on behalf of the Society of American Archivists.

VII. Amendments

1. Any member of the Section may propose amendments to these bylaws in writing to the chair at least six months prior to the annual meeting. Upon agreement of the Steering Committee, proposed amendments shall be submitted to the membership at the annual meeting.

2. Voting on amendments shall occur during the Section's annual meeting. All members of the Section may vote. Voting at the annual meeting shall be by secret ballot. A majority vote of those present at the meeting shall be necessary to approve an amendment.

3. Amendment(s) to bylaws become effective immediately following approval at the annual meeting.

EAD Roundtable Established in Orlando

The inaugural meeting of the EAD Roundtable was held September 4, 1998, at the SAA Annual Meeting in Orlando. Kris Kiesling opened the meeting by giving an EAD update and proposing officers. She announced that Version 1.0 has been released and the application guidelines will be available in the spring. Kris also suggested that the roundtable have a web site.
 Those present approved the proposed officers. They are Tim Young, Chair (Yale University) and Beth Bensman, Vice-chair (Thomas Jefferson University). After an impromptu talk given by Tim Young on how the Beinecke Library Manuscript Unit prepares EAD instances, meeting participants suggested topics for the web site. The following announcement issued by Tim and Beth contains the latest on the status of the site.

EAD Roundtable Mission Statement

The EAD Roundtable of the Society of American Archivists is intended to promote the implementation and use of the

EAD DTD (Encoded Archival Description Document Type Definition) for dissemination of archival information. To this end, it aims to put persons in touch with appropriate information concerning converting existing archival finding aids to EAD format, use of software for markup, parsing, indexing, and document delivery, and the current status of EAD development.

News Notes

The **Library of Congress** has announced that a revision of the cataloging manual, Archival Moving Image Materials, is in progress. The purpose of this manual is to provide instructions for the descriptive cataloging of archival film and video within the framework of the second edition of the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules. The manual was originally compiled in 1984 by Wendy White-Hensen of the Library of Congress Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division (M/B/RS). The current revision, coordinated by the Library's Cataloging Policy and Support Office (CPSO), has been undertaken by a committee of M/B/RS staff with contributions from a committee of the Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA). The draft revision will be available for review and comment from December 1, 1998 to March 1, 1999 on the Library's CPSO home page at http://lcweb.loc.gov/catdir/cpso. Printed copies may also be requested during the review period from CPSO at cpso@loc.gov.

The **United Methodist Church Archives** will begin, in 1999, a program to survey its 66 regional archives in the United States. The survey will produce a collections guide available in both print and electronic formats. The regional archives, called Annual Conference Archives, have holdings relating to the activity of the denomination in their area, as well as some local church records. The project will be coordinated through the denominational archives located at Madison, New Jersey.

Web Site Developments

http://www.library.yale.edu/~dsmith/saa/saadescr.htm

The Description Section web site continues to be updated and improved. Visit the section "Reports from SAA Liaisons" for current reports from the EAD Working Group, the SAA liaison to MARBI, and from OCLC. Under "Sites of Related Interest," links have been added to OCLC and ALA's CC:DA (Committee on Cataloguing: Access and Description). In "Descriptive Standards-Information/ Documentation," can now be found links to the official EAD web site and to the site for the Dublin Core. There is also a link on the main page to the new SAA Technical Subcommittee on Descriptive Standards (TSDS) (formerly CAIE). Comments and suggestions are always welcome, and may be submitted directly to Diana Smith at diana.smith@yale.edu.

Please submit items for future issues to Hodges@library.uta.edu, or to:

Ann Hodges
The University of Texas at Arlington
University Libraries, Special Collections Division
P.O. Box 19497
Arlington, Texas 76019-0497
Fax: (817) 272-3360
Phone: (817) 272-3000, ext. 4963

Descriptive Notes: Fall 1998