

Descriptive Notes

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

Summer 1999

From the Chair

Rob Spindler

The Description Section will meet in Pittsburgh on Friday, August 27, from 8:00 until 10:00 am. Please join us to elect a new Vice-Chair, hear reports from SAA representatives and Section officers, brainstorm program proposals for next year, and vote on our bylaws. Your participation is welcomed!

1999 Description Section Meeting Agenda

I. Welcome from the Chair

II. Reports from SAA Committees and Liaisons

- EAD Working Group - Kris Kiesling
- CC:DA/MARBI/ICA Committee on Descriptive Standards - Michael Fox
- Others To Be Announced

III. Section Reports

- Descriptive Notes Newsletter - Ann Hodges
- Section Web Site - To Be Announced
- Finding Aids Fair - Holly Hodges

IV. Program Proposals Discussion

V. Elections/Approvals

- Election for Incoming Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect
 - Approval of New Section Bylaws
-

Election Time!

The Description Section needs nominations/volunteers for the position of Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect. The election will be held at the Section's meeting during SAA's Annual Meeting in Pittsburgh. The Vice-Chair is responsible for organizing the Finding Aids Fair for next year's SAA Annual Meeting, and generally assists the Chair in planning and implementing the Section's program. The Vice-Chair will become the Chair next year. Please contact the current Chair, Rob Spindler, at rob.spindler@asu.edu to express your interest or to make nominations.

SAA Finding Aids Fair

Holly Hodges

"The Challenge of Contemporary Records"

Do you have an unusual (or typical) finding aid that addresses the challenge of contemporary records? Perhaps an old-fashioned 1940s multipage typescript of box lists/folder lists of the early stages of mushrooming modern records

generation? Or maybe what you think is the latest in technology in trying to meet the challenge of the now ever-burgeoning critical mass of modern records? Can these finding aids measure up to the user demands placed on them? How well do they really work, and are we making progress in using our resources to create finding aids that do the job?

Show and share your stuff with other archivists at the 1999 SAA Finding Aids Fair! Compare and comment with other archivists as you browse finding aids that address the demands of contemporary records.

If you have a finding aid you would like to share with others at the Finding Aids Fair, please contact Holly Hodges, Special Collections Librarian, T. Cartter and Margaret Rawlings Lupton Library, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. Phone: 423/785-2186 or e-mail holly-hodges@utc.edu.

EAD News

Kris Kiesling reports that the EAD Application Guidelines have been completed and will be published soon by SAA. It is hoped that they will be available for purchase at the annual meeting.

Tim Young, chair of the EAD Roundtable, would like to remind Description Section members to visit the EAD Help Pages at <http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/ead>. Tim notes that the Help Pages are updated frequently. Comments or announcements of new EAD projects are welcome and may be reported to Tim at timothy.young@yale.edu or Beth Bensman at bensman1@jefflin.tju.edu. Tim expects that a couple of case studies will be presented at the upcoming meeting of the roundtable at SAA, which will take place on Saturday, August 28, from 8:45 am until 10:15 am.

Meeting Items of Interest

2:45-4:15 pm - Thursday, August 26

Session 13, "Who Has the Record?: The Role of Descriptive Standards in Providing Access to Archival Information in Union Databases." Proposed by Description Section member-at-large, Susan Hamburger, and endorsed by the Manuscript Repositories Section.

8:00-10:00 am - Friday, August 27

****Description Section meeting****

12:45-2:15 pm - Friday, August 27

Session 20, "Standards for Encoding of Digital Archival Objects." Chaired by Kris Kiesling.

Session 26, "Web Sites, Electronic Finding Aids, and the Archival Researcher." Chaired by Susan Hamburger.

2:45-4:15 pm - Friday, August 27

Session 28, "Tobacco, Human Radiation Test, and Asbestos Litigation: The Impact of Current Events on Archives Programs." Proposed by Susan Hamburger and endorsed by the Manuscript Repositories Section and the Technical Subcommittee on Descriptive Standards.

8:45-10:15 am - Saturday, August 28

EAD Roundtable

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, "at large" members may be appointed by the chair as necessary to assist in advancing the Section's goals and objectives. The chair of SAA's Technical Subcommittee on Descriptive Standards (TSDS) serves as an ex officio member.
2. Officers on the Steering Committee must be members of the Section and full or student members of SAA (as defined in the SAA Constitution). 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 Section's 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. "At large" 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 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 chair's absence or inability to serve. The vice-chair shall also be responsible for organizing the Section's annual Finding Aids Fair.
3. The newsletter editor is responsible for preparing the Section's 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 Section's 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 members of the Section and full or student members of the SAA (as defined in the SAA Constitution).
3. The slate of candidates shall be publicized in the Section newsletter in the issue immediately preceding the Section's 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 Section's 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 Section's 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.

News Notes

New Tobacco Thesaurus

Responding to increasing interest in improving long-term accessibility to tobacco-industry related documents, the **American Nonsmokers' Rights Foundation** has now made its thesaurus available for any efforts to organize tobacco related documents. The thesaurus is a controlled vocabulary of terms already being used by ANRF, the Library and Center for Knowledge Management at the University of California, and Michael Tancelosky at Smokescreen, <http://www.tobaccodocuments.com>.

The ANR Foundation created the thesaurus as part of its development of the Tobacco Industry Tracking Database, developed in 1996 to provide improved access to its large collection of materials on the activities of the tobacco industry and its allies. The thesaurus follows ANSI guidelines; its structure facilitates efficient and effective searching in an online environment. It is updated regularly by ANRF information specialists.

For more information or to acquire a copy of the 39-page thesaurus, contact:

Elva Yanez, Associate Director
ANRF
2530 San Pablo Avenue Suite J
Berkeley, California 94702
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e mail: anr@no-smoke.org

Project News

The **Catholic University of America's** Department of Archives, Manuscripts and Museum Collections in Washington, DC. announces a grant-funded project beginning this fall to appraise, arrange and describe records of the **Congress of Industrial Organizations** and the papers of **Philip Murray, John Brophy, Monsignor John A. Ryan and Bishop Francis Haas**. Project staff will also mount finding aids on the Catholic University Archives Web page, plan the microfilming and possible digitization of the CIO, Murray and Brophy records and papers, and write descriptions of the records and papers for placement in archival and historical journals.

The **Vermont Military Records Project** will spend one year preserving and improving access to Vermont military

records held by the Public Records Division of the Department of Buildings and General Services. The Public Records Division and the State Archives will collaborate to conduct the project. Further collaboration will be sought from municipal clerks and private repositories holding military (notably Civil War) records to help identify where such records may be found.

The project will include appraisal, arrangement, preservation, and description of military records salvaged from the fire of 1945, including records from the Revolutionary War, War of 1812, Civil War, and World War I. Project staff will develop finding aids, create catalog records for ARCCAT (the online archival catalog for Vermont collections), and begin scanning those records most at risk.

The **Water Resources Center Archives, UC Berkeley**, has received a grant for a project to organize, describe, preserve, and create online finding aids for its collections on water development in California.

The **St. Johnsbury Collaborative Project** is conducting a 36-month NHPRC-funded project to institute an arrangement and description program. The SJCP is a recently formed collaborative of four repositories and the Historical Society in St. Johnsbury, Vermont: St. Johnsbury Municipal Offices, St. Johnsbury Athenaeum (public library), St. Johnsbury Academy (private secondary school) and Fairbanks Museum.

The **Maryland Historical Society Library** has received a grant for a 20-month project to catalog, arrange and describe the Library's entire photograph collection, which consists of approximately 500,000 images. The main goals of the project are to convert the library's paper-based descriptions to electronic form, improve the arrangement of the various collections, and enhance access using web and digital imaging applications.

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