

# Descriptive Notes

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

Spring 2000

## From the Chair

Holly Hodges

### Thoughts on Archival Description

Rob Spindler, last year's chair for the Description Section, wrote of the changing face of archival description--the many directions that computer technology has opened up for ways to describe archival material. In 1900 description was often limited to hard copy--calendars and cataloguing records. The time researchers would have to spend poring over these sorts of finding aids still boggles me. And I remember having to do research that way myself at one time. In 2000 researching archival material is routinely done by computers among the younger researchers. Yet, in spite of MARC, EAD and the Internet, how much archival description is available in a technological format? For that matter, how much archival material has been described in any format? I would venture that every repository has a backlog. Unprocessed collections are everywhere. The task of processing and description requires endless faith. To keep trying to catch up and hope that backlog will eventually be completed takes incredible belief--even more so when faced with the reality that it really is an impossible goal.

To keep my sanity (or "keep the faith"), I try to stay focused on my own little piece of the archival world. I process, write finding aids, and catalogue. At the moment my goal is to get cataloguing records into my institution's automated library catalogue. Next year it will be different, but like Scarlett, I will worry about that another day.

So I've returned to MARC, old fashioned as it may seem. After all, researchers still search online catalogues, too. But MARC has changed considerably since I first began cataloguing. And I've come to accept that MARC will probably always be changing. The first major change I encountered was the shift from MARC:AMC to integrated format MARC. It took time to get used to leader concepts such as "mixed materials," which I still refer to as "mixed bag." The stuff I find in collections often reminds me of the stuff that collects on my dining room table, which I periodically stuff into the closest grocery bag just before company arrives. It truly is a mixed bag--bills, letters, photos and the pocket calendars I keep losing.

And MARC is keeping up with technology. It was not that long ago that I discovered the new 856 field was a delightful way to connect a cataloguing record to an online finding aid. Moving seamlessly from online catalogue to outside the catalogue at the click of a mouse became so easy that I discovered some researchers weren't even aware they were doing it. It didn't really matter. They thought it was the cat's meow.

The latest change that I really like is the addition of subfields "u" and "l" (think of them as "URL" or "link") to MARC fields that I have been using much longer than 856. Now we can put links to Internet addresses in the appropriate place in a record. A bit cleaner. But ever try explaining the difference between "more information about" and "digital surrogate" to a researcher? No matter, if it's not what they expect they can press the "back" easily enough.

To keep up with changes in MARC I've bookmarked the [MARC Homepage](http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/dnspr00.htm) and follow the [minutes from MARBI](#). Keeps me up on the latest. At least for today.

Section Officers		
Holly Hodges	Bill Landis	Ann Hodges
Chair	Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect	Newsletter Editor
<a href="mailto:holly-hodges@utc.edu">holly-hodges@utc.edu</a>	<a href="mailto:blandis@uci.edu">blandis@uci.edu</a>	<a href="mailto:hodges@library.uta.edu">hodges@library.uta.edu</a>

423/785-2186	949/824-3113	817/272-3393
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## Minutes of the 1999 Description Section Meeting

August 27, 1999

Section Chair Rob Spindler welcomed the members in attendance. In summarizing the work done by the section during the past year, Rob noted that bylaws had been drafted for the section and that the section had sponsored several sessions at the 1999 conference. He thanked past chair Heather Heywood and at-large steering committee member Susan Hamburger for their respective contributions to those efforts. Rob also pointed out that the reorganization of the Technical Subcommittee on Descriptive Standards (TSDS) provides the Description Section an opportunity to become more vital to SAA and to the profession.

First on the agenda were reports from SAA committees, representatives and liaisons. Michael Fox reported from the International Congress on Archives (ICA), Committee on Descriptive Standards. He reported changes to the International Standard for Archival Description (ISAD(G)) including the creation of a statement of principles, the consolidation of the number of elements, the addition of new elements, and the fact that the use of the creator element has been made mandatory. He noted that the committee is to meet in September in Sweden to finalize changes for the ballot to be presented at the ICA plenary in 2000. All rules are to be incorporated into a single code regardless of format. The rules presently contain additional information for treatment of various formats.

In his role as SAA's representative to the ALA Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access (CC:DA) Michael was a member of the Task Force on Rule 0.24 (the AACR2 rule that governs the choice of cataloging rules for multi-faceted works, e.g. an electronic map). The task force is reviewing changes to the rule, which may be of great potential interest to the archival community as well as providing an opportunity for archivists to get more involved in the discussion of the rules. The outcome of the task force's work will have a bearing on the proposed revisions to the Rules for Archival Description and on any future revisions to APPM and/or integration of the two. The task force's report will go forward to the Joint Committee for the Revision of AACR.

As SAA's liaison to ALA's Committee on Machine Readable Bibliographic Information (MARBI), Michael commented on the issue of nonfiling zones (tag 245, indicator 2) and the need to exclude other areas from filing. An example of the use non-filing indicators within the text of a field as well as the beginning would be to exclude from indexing a cataloger's comment inserted into a transcribed title such as [sic] that indicates a typo in the source document. A proposal has been made to create characters that would be embedded in fields to indicate that material which follows them should be excluded. The issue is still under consideration within MARBI as Discussion Paper 118. The discussion paper itself and the summary minutes of the MARBI meetings themselves are available at <http://www.loc.gov/marc>.

Linkage from the 856 field (Electronic Location and Access) to the 555 (Cumulative Index/Finding Aids Note) and 583 (Action Note) fields has been approved. A subfield for the URL was added, creating a direct link from field to finding aid. The addition of other fields was suggested, and such a proposal will be made at ALA Midwinter. Nicole Bouché is a member of the ALA Committee on Descriptive Standards and is coordinating solicitation of submissions. Submissions require the identification of fields, provision of a rationale why they should be linked, and provision of real examples. Michael will coordinate submission to the LC office. It is expected that submissions will also be made by members of the cartographic community.

Bill Landis reported from the SAA Technical Subcommittee on Descriptive Standards (TSDS). TSDS has participated in reviews of ISAD(G), the draft of the EAD Application Guidelines, and the draft of LC's Archival Moving Image Materials. In the latter case, TSDS reviewed both the cataloging guidelines and the extensive commentary provided by the Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA). The Consortium for the Computer Interchange of Museum Information published guidelines for best practices in the use of Dublin Core in the museum community; TSDS gave

input from the archival perspective. The Canadian Committee on Data Structure Standards (CCDSS) requested commentary on a draft RAD/EAD Matrix accompanied by suggestions for additional EAD tags. TSDS participated in providing comments at the invitation of Kris Kiesling, chair of the EAD Working Group. Michael Fox, SAA's MARBI liaison, invited TSDS to provide examples of how the archival community would use a linking field in the USMARC 555 field for finding aid notes. TSDS provided examples, which were incorporated into MARBI Proposal 99:8.

Bill also reported that TSDS had discussed processes at its August 25th meeting. He noted that the scope of TSDS is different than was that of CAIE. Standards are submitted to TSDS from different areas; it gets requests for review from the standards committee and also gets requests for comment from SAA and external groups. TSDS discussed a process that would ensure participation of at least two subcommittee members in all reviews that TSDS agrees to undertake. Bill encouraged interested section members to join the SAACAIE listserv in order to observe the work of TSDS and the Standards Committee. Section members may contact him at [blandis@uci.edu](mailto:blandis@uci.edu) to request to be subscribed to this list.

Bill reported that, as the parent of the EAD Working Group, TSDS had renewed EADWG's charge for another year; that TSDS also participated in the proposal to MARBI of additional fields for linking, as reported by Michael Fox; and that Dennis Meissner of the Minnesota Historical Society is the incoming chair of TSDS. Bill added that TSDS and the Committee on Education and Professional Development (CEPD) will undertake a review of SAA's continuing education offerings relating to description. He called for feedback on description workshops, which he will funnel to the reviewers. Comments may be sent to [blandis@uci.edu](mailto:blandis@uci.edu)

Helen Tibbo, SAA Council liaison for the coming year, gave a welcome from Council. She emphasized that Council recognizes how hard groups within SAA are working and that Council wants to facilitate the work of those groups.

Kris Kiesling, Chair of the EAD Working Group, noted that EADWG meetings are open to all who would like to attend. Kris reported that the EAD Working Group last year received an Institute of Museum and Library Services grant to draft a new version of the EAD Application Guidelines. A subcommittee of the EADWG met at Bentley to redraft the guidelines. Last year the Tag Library was published; the new publication is a guide to EAD from head to toe. Kris noted that the working group would be discussing at its upcoming meeting the possibility of repositioning the group, including increasing its international participation and becoming involved in fundraising.

Second on the agenda were Section Reports. Ann Hodges, Descriptive Notes newsletter editor, renewed her appeal for contributions to and feedback on the newsletter. Diana Smith, coordinator for the section's web site, noted that the Description Section's site is the most extensive among SAA section sites. She also asked for contributions and feedback, and noted that she had reorganized the home page during the past year. Holly Hodges, Section Vice Chair, reported on the Finding Aids Fair and thanked Jon Reynolds for his assistance in establishing a site for the electronic finding aids and Debra Mills for arranging for an ethernet connection. Rob encouraged section members to visit the Fair.

Before turning to agenda item three, discussion of program proposals, Rob announced that he will be the section's liaison to the program committee for the next year. Session proposal forms were to be left with Holly Hodges, incoming Section Chair, and were available in the conference packet as well as on the SAA web site. Deadline for submission of program proposals was October 8. The 2000 conference has no formal theme, but proposals that look toward the future of the profession and reflect its diversity are requested. Rob noted that sessions may take several formats, and urged consideration of all possibilities.

Returning to his role as Section Chair, Rob opened discussion of ideas for session proposals to be sponsored by the section. He stressed the importance of keeping descriptive issues on the SAA program, given the fast-changing nature of descriptive issues. In contrast to last year's fruitful discussion, no proposal ideas were presented during the formal meeting.

Agenda item four being the nomination and election of a Vice Chair/Chair-Elect, Rob presented Bill Landis and Susan Hamburger as the nominees. Each gave a brief summary of his/her qualifications for the office. Ballots were counted by Vice Chair, Holly Hodges, and Rob announced that Bill Landis had been elected. He will serve the section as Vice Chair for the coming year and will become Chair the following year.

Agenda item five was approval of the new Description Section bylaws. The bylaws were published twice in Descriptive Notes (a first draft and a slightly revised version) and were posted for most of the year on the section's web site, during which time comments were requested. The bylaws were also distributed at the section meeting. Upon the motion for their approval being seconded, the bylaws were approved by acclamation in a voice vote. Rob thanked Heather Heywood, past Chair, for her fine work on preparing the bylaws. The meeting was adjourned.

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## *News Notes*

Section members **Michael Fox** and **Peter Wilkerson** have published *Introduction to Archival Organization and Description*. An introductory guide, the publication presents archival concepts and practices in a succinct and straightforward style. Its length is a modest and easily-digested 41 pages, excluding appendices. It is certain to be useful and user-friendly to novices to the profession and its theory and practices. Edited by Suzanne Warren and reviewed by Helen Tibbo, Kris Kiesling, and Timothy Ericson, the work was published by the Getty Information Institute. It is available in paperback for \$12.00 or at [www.schistory.org](http://www.schistory.org).

Peter has also called to our attention that at <http://www.schistory.org/getty/> is an online introduction to the principles of organization and description used in archives. It is a first step towards acquiring the knowledge and skills needed to provide access to the rich cultural heritage information in archival collections. The site also includes links to additional resources for further archival training such as workshops, readings, professional organizations, archival education programs and conferences.

### **DeGolyer Library Announces Opening of Stanley Marcus Collection**

Acquired in late 1992 and early 1993, the Stanley Marcus Papers comprise nearly 400 cubic feet of material related to the legendary Neiman-Marcus executive and renowned Dallas civic leader. After nearly two years of full-time processing, the DeGolyer Library anticipates the collection opening in early summer 2000. A fully indexed and categorized finding aid will accompany the collection to aid on-site researchers. The library also is currently in the developmental stages of posting the finding aid online for off-site use.

The collection spans from 1950 to the present and primarily documents Marcus' business and civic affairs. Topics range from the anti-communist movement in Dallas to the Neiman-Marcus Fortnights to the civil rights movement. The overall scope of Marcus' papers will provide researchers with information on various fields, including the fashion industry, business history, Dallas and United States history, civil rights and the arts. Correspondents include Lyndon Johnson and other past United States presidents, Dallas civic leaders and government officials, actors, and fashion aficionados among many others.

Interested persons can contact the project archivist, Alex Lorch, at (214) 768-1796 or the DeGolyer Library curator and archivist, Kay Bost, at (214) 768-2661.

### **Update from the EAD Roundtable**

The EAD HELP PAGES (located at <http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/ead/>) recently underwent a few changes, additions, and rearrangements in order better serve the EAD community. These included a revision of the annotated site list that now breaks down the process by preparation, mark-up, validation, derivations, and indexing/delivery. The HELP PAGES were also re-organized with expanded sections listing types of software for SGML and XML, a section containing links to various metadata types along with definitions, a section devoted to converting files to EAD; and a list of Helper Files for specific software. In addition, David Ruddy of Cornell University is working on a section specifically devoted to XML and its use with EAD. As always, we welcome any comments or suggestions since our goal is to provide information and contacts so that EAD can be as widely implemented as possible. Feel free to address your thoughts to any of us listed below.

Also, be sure to join us for the EAD Roundtable meeting in Denver on Saturday September 2 from 8:45 am to 10:15 am. The agenda will include speakers discussing grant funding opportunities and tips on writing grants for EAD projects. There will also be time devoted to hearing what you have to say and your thoughts on the direction of the Roundtable for the next year. Hope to see you there!

<b>EAD Roundtable Officers</b>		
<b>Beth Bensman</b>	<b>Naomi Nelson</b>	<b>Timothy Young</b>
Chair	Vice Chair	Chair Emeritus and Webmaster
University Archives	Special Collections	Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
Thomas Jefferson University	Emory University	Yale University
<a href="mailto:Beth.Bensman@mail.tju.edu">Beth.Bensman@mail.tju.edu</a>	<a href="mailto:Libnn@emory.edu">Libnn@emory.edu</a>	<a href="mailto:Timothy.Young@yale.edu">Timothy.Young@yale.edu</a>

### 1999 Finding Aids Fair

The 1999 Finding Aids Fair web site has been transferred to the Description Section's site at Yale (<http://www.library.yale.edu/~dsmith/saa/saadescr.htm>). The section officers would like to commend the late Jon Reynolds for his help with the 1999 Fair. His creation of the web site allowed the Fair to make its first appearance on the web. Its presence there was especially helpful to those who could not attend the annual meeting, some of whom were so appreciative that they expressed their thanks in writing to our section chair, Holly Hodges. Thanks are also due to Diana Smith for coordinating the transfer to the Description Section web site and to all who contributed finding aids. Their participation was, of course, essential to the successful outcome of the Fair.

### News of Grants & Projects

The **Center for the Study of Women and Gender at the University of Texas at San Antonio** received a twelve-month NHPRC grant to process manuscript collections in the Archives for Research on Women and Gender. The project will create EAD and print finding aids and USMARC records, and produce an archival collections subject guide. **Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory** is conducting a project to organize the personal papers of Nobelist Dr. James D. Watson. The papers contain manuscripts, photographs, correspondence, and other records pertaining to major events in the history of molecular biology, and are intended to be a part of a future Laboratory Center for the History of Molecular Biology and Genetics. A project is underway at the **California State University Historical Archives**, housed at CSU's Dominguez Hills campus, to process California State University System materials. Work will include enhancement of the archives' web site, scanning of selected archival resources and encoding finding aids. The CSU Historical Archives documents the creation of the CSU system, collects materials of statewide importance and serves as an archives for the CSU Office of the Chancellor. **Princeton's Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library** is undertaking a project to survey, appraise, preserve, arrange and describe records from the University Archives. The project archivist will perform reference duties as well as produce finding aids and bibliographic records. **Columbia University Archives** and **Columbiana Library Morningside Campus** received a fifteen-month grant from the NHPRC. Project goals are to arrange and describe approximately 27,600 images from Columbia's Campus Views, Biographical Photographs, and Subject Photographs collections, which date from the 1880s through the 1960s. **The Cartoon Research Library at Ohio State University Libraries** is engaged in a project to organize its San Francisco Academy of Comic Art comic strip clipping and tear sheet files. The project archivist will compile an inventory, supervise rehousing, create an EAD finding aid, and provide reference service. The **Southern Highland Craft Guild** in Asheville, NC, received a two-year grant to process and catalog the archives of the Southern Highland Craft Guild. The collections consist of approximately 200 boxes of photographs, scrapbooks, correspondence, and board and corporate minutes. The SHCG's archives date from 1895 and cover the founding of the Southern Arts and Crafts Movement. **Smith College** plans a project to survey, appraise, preserve, arrange and describe the records of the college held in the College Archives, which documents the history of Smith College from its creation in 1871 to the present. **The New York University Libraries** received a one-year grant from the Mellon Foundation to create collection and

item-level cataloging records for the New York Historical Society Library's manuscripts, archives, and visual materials collections. The **Reeves Library of Moravian College** and the **Bethlehem Area Public Library** plan a one-year grant-funded digital local history project to create a dynamic virtual collection of previously unavailable or nearly unavailable materials relating to Bethlehem, PA from 1740-1840. The **Hagley Museum and Library**, an independent research library in Wilmington, Delaware specializing in the history of business and technology, received a five-year grant to appraise, conserve, arrange, and describe its unprocessed collections. **Sierra Madre Public Library** was awarded a LSTA grant for its Archival Preservation, Access, and Co-ownership project, which will develop and manage the historical collections co-owned by the Sierra Madre Public Library and the Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society. **Clemson University Libraries, Special Collections Unit**, plans a project to arrange and describe its James F. Byrnes and Walter Brown Collections. The **Dallas Museum of Art**, which will celebrate its 100th year in 2003, received grant funding from the Fondren and Hoblitzelle Foundations to formulate and implement archives and records management programs for the museum. The project archivist will plan programs and storage spaces and institute procedures which provide efficient access to materials. The archivist will also identify and make accessible materials that are critical to planning the centennial celebrations. The **Albert and Ethel Herzenstein Library** at the **San Jacinto Museum of History**, La Porte, Texas, is engaged in a two-year project to arrange, rehouse and describe the museum's archives, which consist of approximately 1000 cubic feet of multi-media, electronic, and paper-based records. The project archivist will also implement the museum's records retention schedule, evaluate preservation needs, and make collections available by means of printed and electronic guides. The **South Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina, Columbia** received a grant from NEH to rehouse and catalogue its photograph collection. The project archivist will arrange and describe for electronic access the library's collection of over 25,000 images. **Hanover College** is conducting a one-year project to provide basic control of its collections of organizational and personal papers. The **Duggan Library's** collections consist of Hanover College historical materials, papers of the Indiana Presbyterian Church, miscellaneous Indiana materials, and collections of personal papers of faculty and alumni. The project archivist will process collections, conduct basic preservation, create inventories and internal documentation, and produce USMARC catalog records. The **New Jersey Historical Society** received a two-year NHPRC grant to arrange and describe its 18th and 19th-century manuscript collections relating to the history of New Jersey. The **Massachusetts Historical Society** received a one-year grant for a retrospective cataloging project. As part of the Society's library automation plan the project manuscript cataloger will create collection-level MARC records, which will be entered into the Society's local automated catalog and OCLC. The **Historical Society of Pennsylvania** received an NHPRC grant to arrange, rehouse, and describe materials. The Society's holdings are among the nation's foremost research collections in American history. The **State Historical Society of Iowa (SHSI)** received a two-year IMLS-funded grant to process and disseminate SHSI's Iowa Labor Collection. Goals of the project are to describe approximately 135 union and labor-related manuscript collections, to prepare finding aids in preparation for microfilming 1,100 oral history transcripts, and to process and maintain audio-visual materials. The **American Dance Festival Archives** was awarded a grant from the National Initiative to Preserve America's Dance (NIPAD), a program under the umbrella SAVE AS: DANCE, underwritten by the Pew Charitable Trusts and administered at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. The grant will fund a two-year project to extend the model partnership with Duke University Libraries by assuring the preservation of ADF's modern dance collection from the 1930s to the present, increasing physical and intellectual access to the collection and furthering scholarship through use of its materials. The **Grolier Club** of New York, the country's oldest bibliophile society, plans a project to process the newly-acquired papers of the American Booksellers Association of America (ABAA), consisting of approximately 30 linear feet of material. The **University of Chicago Library, Department of Special Collections**, plans a two-year project to process selected twentieth-century manuscript and archival collections, principally the papers of Edward H. Levi (University of Chicago president, provost, and law school dean) and the papers of Philip M. Klutznick (Chicago real estate developer, civic leader, and philanthropist). The **Western Museum of Mining & Industry** is conducting a nine-month project to catalog, organize and create finding aids for a collection of mining company records. **Monmouth Public Library** received LSTA funding for its Polk Cooperative History Project, which will classify, conserve, and promote local history resources in six Polk County, Oregon, institutions between March, 2000, and January, 2001. The **Southwestern Writers Collection at Southwest Texas State University** received funding from the Texas State Library and Archives Commission to arrange and describe the first five years of the Editorial Series of the Texas Monthly Magazine Archives, approximately 50 linear feet of the 900 linear foot collection. The project archivist will create a finding aid, a MARC record for the collection, and a correspondents index. **MIT Lincoln Laboratory**, which has pioneered in advanced electronics since its origin in 1951 as a Federally Funded Research and Development Center of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is conducting a project to process and make

accessible its archives in readiness for its 50th anniversary. The project archivist will appraise, arrange, and describe historical documents; prepare a Research Laboratory history; create finding aids; and conduct basic preservation.

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Please submit items for future issues to [Hodges@library.uta.edu](mailto: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

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