

Descriptive Notes

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

Summer 2000

From the Chair

Holly Hodges

This past year I have served as chair for your Description Section in SAA. It has been especially rewarding for me and I thank you for the privilege. Learning the ropes of committees, the internal workings of the organization and program planning have been demanding and it is important that you know that I have received considerable support from Bill Landis, vice chair; Ann Hodges, Descriptive Notes editor; members at large Susan Hamburger and Kathleen Dow; and our Council liaison Helen Tibbo. And first and foremost, you, the Section members.

The field of description is changing in many ways, yet the basic goal remains the same--enabling researchers to identify materials sought for their work. Technology has become more sophisticated and the means by which we disseminate our descriptions have also become more sophisticated--witness the development of Encoded Archival Description and Extensible Markup Language, and such bridging utilities as Z39.50. As the volume of information mushrooms, so will the volume of work ahead of us.

Bill Landis will be the next chair for the Section, and I hope you will be supportive of his leadership in the developing future of archival description. Again, thank you.

2000 Description Section Meeting Agenda

I. Welcome from the Chair

II. Reports from SAA Committees and Liaisons

- EAD Working Group - Kris Kiesling
- TSDS (Technical Services and Descriptive Standards Committee) - Dennis Meissner
- CC:DA Committee on Descriptive Standards - Michael Fox (Michael will include reports on the Cataloging from Metadata Task Force and the Rule 0.24 Revision Task Force)
- MARBI (US MARC Advisory Board) - Michael Fox
- OCLC - Susan Westberg

III. Section Reports

- *Descriptive Notes* Newsletter - Ann Hodges
- Section Web Site - Karen Spicher (for Diana Smith)
- Finding Aids Fair - Bill Landis

IV. Section Mission Statement and Bylaws

- Discussion of amendment to bylaws regarding absentee balloting

V. Proposals

- Publication proposals
- 2001 Program proposals

VI. Election of Vice Chair/Chair Elect

VII. Sessions Sponsored by the Section

The Description Section will meet in Denver on Friday, September 1, from 8:00 until 10:00 am. Please join us to elect a new Vice Chair, hear reports from SAA representatives and Section officers, and discuss proposals for publications and future programs. Please be sure to study the candidate statements below. The choice between the nominees will be a difficult one.

Election for New Vice Chair/Chair Elect

The Description Section is fortunate to have two highly-qualified nominees for the office of Vice Chair/Chair Elect for 2000-2001. Please read the candidate narratives below and come to the Section meeting prepared to cast your ballot.

Absentee ballots will be made available upon request to Description Section members who will not be attending the Annual Meeting in Denver. To request an absentee ballot, send a letter or e-mail to Newsletter Editor, Ann Hodges. Send your e-mail request to hodges@library.uta.edu no later than Monday, August 14. If you do not have an e-mail account, send your request, postmarked by Monday, August 7, to Ann Hodges, P.O. Box 19497, Arlington, TX 76019-0497.

Ballots must be returned via regular mail to Section Chair, Holly Hodges, and must be postmarked no later than Tuesday, August 15, 2000.

REQUEST ballots from:	RETURN ballots to:
hodges@library.uta.edu	Holly Hodges
	Special Collections
or	Lupton Library Dept 6456
Ann Hodges	UTChattanooga
P.O. Box 19497	615 McCallie Avenue
Arlington, TX 76019-0497	Chattanooga, TN 37403-2598

CANDIDATE NARRATIVES

Susan Hamburger

Susan Hamburger received her B.A. and M.L.S. from Rutgers, and M.A. and Ph.D. in American History from Florida State. She has worked in Special Collections and archives since 1981 in Florida, Virginia, and Pennsylvania as a reference librarian for seven years, an archivist for six years, and, for the last six years, as a manuscripts cataloger at Penn State. Her archival research focuses on subject access to and within EAD finding aids. Since 1988 Dr. Hamburger has been active in the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference as a session presenter, the chair of the Publications Committee, member of several and co-chair of one

Mary Lacy

Education: Cornell University, B.A., 1974; University of Virginia, M.A., 1978; University of Maryland, M.L.S., 1987. Present Position: Archivist, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, 1994-present. Previous Positions: Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress: Assistant Head, Processing Section, 1991-94; Processing Librarian, 1989-91; Rare Book Preliminary Cataloger, 1987-89. SAA Activities: member since 1991 of SAA's Description Section, Manuscript Repositories Section, and of the EAD Roundtable since its founding. Related Professional Associations: Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives

program committee, and web site designer and webmaster—for all of which she received two service awards. For SAA, she served on the Host Site Local Arrangements Committee for the 1999 Pittsburgh conference, leading tours to Fallingwater and the Andy Warhol Museum, and working at the registration table. As the At-Large Representative for the Description Section, 1998-1999 and 1999-2000, Dr. Hamburger created and organized two successful session proposals for 1999 and one for 2000. For the Manuscripts Repositories Section, she served on the Steering Committee, 1998-2000; Nominations and Elections Subcommittee, 1998-1999; and organized one successful session proposal for 1999. She has been a moderator, commentator, and/or presenter at various professional conferences including SAA, MARAC, RBMS, Association of Canadian Archivists, Digital Library Federation, and the North American Society for Sport History. In Denver she will be presenting a paper based on the results of her grant-funded project to study how patrons search for manuscripts online. She has published articles in periodicals (*American Archivist*, *C&RL News*, *Florida Historical Quarterly*), encyclopedias (*American National Biography*, *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, *Encyclopedia of Rural America*), reference books (*The American Civil War: A Handbook of Literature and Research* and *A Guide to the History of Florida*), and a monograph chapter (*Before the New Deal: Southern Social Welfare History*), and continues to find time to write book reviews for several publications.

Conference (MARAC): member 1990-present; presented paper on Encoded Archival Description at 1996 meeting, College Park, Md.; co-taught "Introduction to EAD" workshops, offered at Wilmington, Delaware in 1997, Washington, D.C. in 1998, and on repeated occasions for LC staff. Rare Book and Manuscript Section (RBMS), Association of College and Research Libraries, American Library Association: elected member-at-large (three-year term), 2000; Seminars Committee, chair, 1997-present; Conference Development Committee, member, 1999-present; Seminars Committee, member, 1993-97; represented RBMS at the National Forum on Archival Continuing Education (NFACE), spring 2000. Publications: co-author "EAD Testing and Implementation at the Library of Congress," *American Archivist*, Fall 1997. Articles published in newsletters of SAA Manuscript Repositories Section, RBMS, and American Printing History Association. Interests/Experiences in Description: Processing collections of personal papers, cataloging rare materials and special collections. Currently my primary responsibility is for the creation of electronic finding aids (originally performing ASCII conversion for gopher access, then testing and implementing the emerging standard of Encoded Archival Description). This activity includes coordinating with and training staff in other Library divisions, and working with manuscript catalogers to maintain links between catalog records and finding aids. I chair a committee charged with developing standard practices for LC EAD finding aids, and served on a committee revising the Manuscript Division's manual for preparing finding aids which addressed issues raised in the course of implementing EAD.

2000 Finding Aids Fair

Bill Landis

Vice Chair, Description Section

What is [ISAD\(G\) \(General International Standard Archival Description\)](#) all about and how can it help me in my day-to-day work? This question might be on the minds of SAA Description Section members and other archivists today. ISAD(G) has just been through its first five-year revision cycle (a process in which SAA's Technical Subcommittee on Descriptive Standards participated) and has emerged stronger and more clearly articulated. Michael Fox of the Minnesota Historical Society represented the SAA on the Committee on Descriptive Standards, the International Council on Archives (ICA) unit charged with the care and feeding of ISAD(G).

ISAD(G) defines standard elements of archival description. It does not specify how they should be arranged in a specific output or descriptive product (in other words, it will not tell you what your finding aids should look like, either in EAD or in a word-processed document). ISAD(G) seems here to stay as a powerful tool for archivists the world over to use in standardizing the types of information they use in describing their collections, record groups, and fonds. As more of us turn to the World Wide Web as a venue for delivering both surrogate descriptions of our materials and, increasingly, digital objects themselves, the stakes are higher for us to engage in standardization activities in our own

repositories that will make our archival descriptions and digital materials (both digital originals and digital facsimiles) easier to use online for traditional and newly discovered patrons.

The Description Section's annual Finding Aids Fair has generally been focused on the finding aid as a freely floating object for inspection, divorced from any analysis of the descriptive standards that underpin it (or in many cases fail to do so). At the 64th SAA annual meeting in Denver, in the Exhibitor's Hall that will be open on Thursday and Friday, August 31-September 1, the Description Section will hold a different kind of Finding Aids Fair. The 2000 Fair will focus on providing those who wander through with a better understanding of ISAD(G) and its relationship to the various descriptive tools that we produce (e.g., word-processed, EAD-encoded, or database-derived finding aids and collection-level MARC records).

Description Section members and all participants in this year's annual meeting are invited to bring along examples of your current finding aids or other descriptive tools so that you can evaluate for yourselves how your tools fare in relation to the international standard embodied by ISAD(G). The 2000 Finding Aid Fair is being designed to be self-paced and self-educational, so no one will be looking over your shoulder analyzing your descriptive tools. There is no single "right" way of implementing ISAD(G) in your repository practice, but there will be several examples of finding aids that illustrate a variety of ways of incorporating ISAD(G). Also featured will be crosswalks to help attendees understand how ISAD(G) elements map to encoding standards such as EAD and USMARC. The Finding Aids Fair should be informative and useful even if you don't choose to bring along one of your own finding aids to evaluate. Much of the information presented at the Finding Aids Fair will be made available on the Web following the SAA meeting in Denver for those who won't be able to attend.

So bring a finding aid! Bring a friend! Plan to spend some time in Denver learning a bit more about how ISAD(G) might be beneficial to you right where you work!

EAD Roundtable Meeting

Beth Bensman

Chair, EAD Roundtable

Mark your calendar! The EAD Roundtable meeting in Denver will be held on Saturday, September 2, from 8:45 am to 10:15 am. Please join us for the election of a new Vice Chair/Chair Elect and to hear updates on XML, the activities of Archival Resources, and additions to the EAD HELP PAGES (located at <http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/ead/>). The meeting will also feature two speakers - Barbara Paulson from NEH and Kevin Cawley from the University of Notre Dame. Barbara will discuss grant funding opportunities for EAD projects and tips on grant-writing, while Kevin will focus on the EAD process at Notre Dame and their use of XML. 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!

Cataloging News

Michael Fox

SAA Liaison to CC:DA and MARBI

The principal subject of deliberations of the Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access during the American Library Association's Midwinter Meeting in February 2000 was the proposed revision of AACR2 Rule 0.24. The proposal, as forwarded by the Committee to the international governing body for AACR, calls for a complete restructuring of the code so that the rules are organized by area of description rather than form of material. If adopted, this change will take several years to complete given the need to reconcile inconsistencies that have been developed across the different format chapters. This review will provide an opportunity for the archival community to suggest revisions to the current text of Chapter 4, which deals with manuscript materials. The second, and even more

controversial, part of the proposal suggests guidelines that specify when changes in the expression or manifestation a work require the creation of a new catalog record. Given the complexity of this issue, an early resolution of the various options is not expected.

The ALA MARBI Committee adopted several changes to the MARC21 format that are of interest to the archival cataloging community. Two involve fields used to create hyperlinks between MARC records and other electronic resources. In Field 856, subfield \$u was renamed Uniform Resource Indicator (URI) to conform to current Internet practice. This subfield will now contain both URL and URN addresses, subfield \$g having been made obsolete.

Catalogers wishing to create such electronic links from specific note fields can now include such references in fields 505, 514, 520, 530, 545, and 552, as well as in fields 555 and 583, which were authorized during the ALA annual meeting last summer. A subfield \$2 was added to Field 583 to indicate the source of an action term used in this field. The immediate impetus for this change comes from the preservation community, which wishes to adopt a standardized terminology to be used when recording conservation, reformatting or other preservation work.

While MARBI proposals and discussion papers for the forthcoming ALA annual meeting have not yet been released, the annual joint meeting of CC:DA and MARBI will discuss the use of Extensible Markup Language (XML) as a possible replacement format for MARC.

MHS Resolves Display Dilemma for Large Finding Aid

Lyda Morehouse

Processing Assistant Minnesota Historical Society

The Minnesota Historical Society has been using Encoded Archival Description (EAD) to create our finding aids for a number of years. Because most Internet browsers are not yet capable of reading XML (Extensible Markup Language) documents, we transform our XML into HTML copies for web access. We recently completed the processing of the Harold Stassen papers which resulted in a fairly large finding aid, the print copy running to more than 100 pages. As is our practice, we converted the finding aid from XML into HTML and mounted it on our web site in March.

Almost as soon as the Stassen papers were uploaded, we became aware that the size and complexity of the HTML file caused many Netscape browsers to choke. Some patrons complained of time-outs and occasionally a complete crash. Unfortunately, since much of the staff at MHS relies exclusively on Internet Explorer, we hadn't anticipated the problem. The problem proved to be an HTML problem, not an XML one. However, our solution came through XML rather than HTML. The HTML table proved to be too large and complex for Netscape to process. To address the issue, we devised a way of using our XSL (Extensible Stylesheet Language) stylesheet to automate breaking up the inventory for large collections like Stassen's into multiple files, one for each series.

The current practice at MHS is for archival processors to compose either part, or all, of the finding aid in MS Word 95, using a MHS-specific template (called either "Fruin," "Feith," or "Muller," the choice of which is dependent on the complexity of the collection). Once that work is completed, staff use a series of MHS-specific processes to translate the file into SGML and then to XML. Therefore, all of our EAD documents ultimately end up as XML files. It is from this XML document that we run an XSL stylesheet--also created in-house--to produce the "finished" web product in HTML.

Part of the new challenge presented by the Stassen size problem was that we had never before designed a stylesheet that would take one document and convert it into many HTML files. Luckily, the "Muller" template is nicely divided into series and sub-series. For instance, the Stassen collection's first series is entitled: "Personal Papers." Within "Personal Papers," there are three sub-series, "Biographical and Ephemeral Material," "Interviews and Articles," and "Photographs and Drawings." Each one is then broken down further to the file folder level and, occasionally, to specific items like individual photographs. The Stassen papers are divided into seven series, each of which contains a multitude of sub-series.

At the XML level, these series and sub-series are denoted by the code c0#. For instance, the series level "Personal Papers" is c01, and its sub-series, "Biographical and Ephemeral Materials" is encoded as c02. We needed to devise a way for the XSL stylesheet to automatically count the number of c01 components and create a new file for each. File names are based on the original file name followed by a sequential number. Thus, Stassen, which had been arbitrarily named 00202.html, would end up with a group of files (composed of the seven series coded at the c01-level), named 00202-1.html through 00202-7.html with appropriate hyperlinks among them. Through a process of trial and error, and use of an XSL feature called xsl:number, we were able to do it. All that remained to be done was to format the file so that it meshed with the look and feel of our other finding aids. We also added links for the researcher to follow from one section of the Stassen papers to the next.

Although we used Stassen as our main guide, this stylesheet works on any "Muller"-tagged document. We uploaded our multi-paged version of the Harold E. Stassen Papers in May 2000, and it is available for viewing at: <http://www.mnhs.org/library/findaids/00202.html>.

News Notes

The **Rosenberg Library's Galveston & Texas History Center** has made a concerted effort to improve intellectual control of and access to its holdings over the past several months. Casey Edward Greene and Alexandra Dawson, page, entered the archives thesaurus in Microsoft Access as the initial step of The Texas History Internet Consortium project. The thesaurus, which comprises approximately 14,000 terms, is an in-house, structured vocabulary used to index manuscripts, maps, photographs, and other materials. It will be used to index archival materials described in Access as part of the Internet Consortium project. The Center is also conducting a volunteer project to describe its newspaper collection in Access, and has begun describing its extensive 1900 Storm photographs in Access.

The **Galveston & Texas History Center at the Rosenberg Library** is the main repository for manuscripts and photographs regarding the 1900 Galveston Storm, the deadliest natural disaster in the United States. In response to the increasing interest in the 1900 Storm, a result of the approaching centennial on September 8, 2000, the Rosenberg Library has made available on their web site a complete list of their 1900 Storm holdings, including scanned photographs. These descriptions are available at: <http://www.rosenberg-library.org/gthc/1900storm.htm>

The **Arizona Jewish Historical Society** has received a \$20,556 grant of Federal Library Services and Technology Act funds for a collaborative project with the **Arizona State University Libraries** to make the society's oral history collection available through the internet. The project, entitled "Shema Arizona," will place searchable full-text editions of the transcripts on a web site along with brief audio excerpts of the interviews. Each transcript will be fully cataloged in the ASU Libraries online system with links from the catalog records to the transcript texts. The web site with transcripts should be opened to the public by fall, while full cataloging will be available by April 2001.

The **San Jacinto Museum of History** has received a two-year grant to arrange, organize, rehouse and describe the archives of the San Jacinto Museum of History and its collection of historical documents. The primary focus is on the processing of approximately 800-900 cubic feet of records in paper and electronic form, as well as in other media.

The **New York University Libraries** and **New York Historical Society Library** received a two-year grant from the Mellon Foundation. It will fund the processing of manuscript collections relating to the history of New York and the United States, the review and revision of existing finding aids, the creation of new finding aids, and SGML markup for Encoded Archival Description.

The **Five College consortium--Amherst, Hampshire, Mount Holyoke, and Smith Colleges**, and the **University of Massachusetts Amherst**--are collaborating in a three-year grant-funded project to create a cooperative database of finding aids for the Five College Archives and Special Collections. The goal of the project is to create a cooperative, single, searchable, standardized, public database of approximately 1,200 finding aids from the Five College

institutions, in HTML and EAD format and linked to MARC records in the Five College Catalog.

The **New York City Municipal Reference and Research Center** received a grant for the reorganization of a collection of public health documents from the late 19th century to the 1980s. The collection is to be organized into a coherent and usable sequence; a catalog index to the collection, consistent with that of other holdings of the MRRC, will be created; and items in need of repair or conservation will be identified in preparation for a future conservation project.

The **University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology** is conducting a pilot project funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to create online scholarly access to archaeological and anthropological museum collections. Project personnel will develop a researcher needs assessment, design a database and user interface integrating artifactual and archival data, coordinate a faculty/staff advisory group, evaluate program effectiveness, and prepare a major implementation grant proposal.

Duke University's Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library received an NEH grant to process and describe its Hartman Center outdoor advertising collections, including manuscript collections, print material, and other media. Project personnel will create finding aids for the collections and encode the text of inventories for the World Wide Web.

The **Scott Memorial Library of Thomas Jefferson University** received a grant in the amount of \$15,000 from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. The grant provides funds to hire a project archivist to process, arrange, and describe the papers of the Solis-Cohen family located in Jefferson's University Archives and Special Collections Department. At 110 linear feet, the Solis-Cohen family papers form the largest collection of manuscript materials held by the Archives. It is also the largest collection of Solis-Cohen materials in the Philadelphia area. Dating from the early 1850s through 1960, the collection documents more than 100 years of one of the most significant eras in the history of medicine through the papers of one of the most prominent Jewish families in the Philadelphia area. The materials mainly focus on the education, professional career, and medical practice of Dr. Jacob daSilva Solis-Cohen and his son, Dr. Myer Solis-Cohen. For additional information, contact University Archivist Beth Bensman at (215) 503-8097 or beth.bensman@mail.tju.edu.

The **St. Johnsbury Archives Collaborative** is seeing results from its NHPRC grant to preserve the historical records of St. Johnsbury, Vermont, and to make them accessible to the public. In partnership with the St. Johnsbury Athenaeum, St. Johnsbury Academy, the Town of St. Johnsbury, and the St. Johnsbury Historical Society, the Fairbanks Museum and Planetarium is administering a three-year project to arrange, describe, catalog and preserve the documentary holdings of the five organizations. Project Manager Ann Lawless reports that to date the project archivist, Selene Colburn, and a team of volunteers under her direction have completed a survey of the cased photograph collection and have processed the diaries of George Felch (1885-1937), several Civil War collections, the records of the Fairbanks Museum, and more. Future work includes developing a union catalog describing what each institution holds and how the collections are interrelated, continuing to assist each institution in developing professional archives management policies and procedures, and making information about each collection available on the internet.

Charles Schultz at **Texas A&M University** in College Station is nearing completion of finding aids for the Official State Papers of Governor William P. Clements, whose two terms cover the years 1979-1983 and 1987-1991. Schultz has completed finding aids for all the series of the first term and for most of the series of the second term. Go to www.library.tamu.edu/cushing/ and click on "collections" and then on "modern politics" to view the Clements finding aids.

Charles Schultz of Texas A&M University reports below his experiences regarding the time and expense involved in processing large archives collections. His findings result from his work on the Official State Papers of Governor William P. Clements of Texas.

In November 1999, I did a progress report on my work on the Clements Papers. At that time I had been working on them full time since September 1994, or five years and three months. Based upon previous experience with large political collections, we had originally estimated it would take between 20 and 30 hours per linear foot of materials to

completely process and prepare finding aids for such a collection. In the 10,250 hours that I worked on the Clements Papers I completely processed and described 570 feet, or approximately 18 hours per foot. The total hours do not take into consideration a month of annual leave each year, sick leave, professional leave to attend meetings, the six weeks I spent drafting a book manuscript, time devoted to checking the archives listserv, or the hours I devoted to library and university committee work. I would roughly estimate that these activities consumed about 25 percent of the 10,250 hours. In order to determine the cost of processing a collection one needs only determine what the processor is to be paid, figure out what that would be on an hourly basis, and multiply the hourly rate by the number of hours.

I estimate that in the course of processing these records I have reduced the amount of shelf space required to store them by between 25 and 30 percent. This has been accomplished by removing duplicate materials, envelopes that do not contain information not readily found in the correspondence to which they were attached, and some records that were not official records of the governor's office but were rather materials received (such as Legislative Clipping Service and State Comptroller's Office reproductions of clippings), and by filling all new boxes to maximum capacity. Since these materials will be retained permanently, every foot of saved space will constitute an annual savings to Texas A&M of whatever amount it costs to store a foot of records on its shelves.

In time, the university will recoup everything it paid me for this processing project by not having to store between 25 and 30 percent of the Clements Papers that could be legally discarded according to state records laws. In addition, since almost everything that has been removed from the records has been or will be recycled, the university will have received some funds for the sale of the discarded paper as well as not having had to pay the city for placing it in the dump or whatever such places are called now. Several years ago, the cost of placing trash in the dump was \$17.50 per ton. I expect that has risen as has everything else.

Many thanks to everyone who contributed to this issue. Please submit items for future issues to Hodges@library.uta.edu, or to:

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| [Previous issue](#) | [Next issue](#) | [Return to Section Newsletter page](#) |