Descriptive Notes

From the Chair   Mary Lacy

I am grateful to you all for the opportunity to serve your chair over the past year. When we last met in August, no one could have predicted how the world, our lives, and our work would change. Working through these changes could not have happened in better company. I'd like to thank the steering committee, Tara Zachary Laver and Chris Prom; outgoing/incoming newsletter editors, Ann Hodges and John Rees; outgoing/incoming webmasters, Diana Smith and Diane Ducharme; and our vice-chair, Brad Westbrook, into whose capable hands I will leave this office. The hard work of all these individuals has benefited the section in ways I cannot adequately describe. Let's have a great meeting in Birmingham!

Section Meeting Agenda

I. Welcome from the Chair

II. Reports from SAA Committees and Liaisons

EAD Working Group - Kris Kiesling
US MARC Advisory Board (MARBI) - Michael Fox
ICA Committee on Descriptive Standards - M. Fox
SAA Technical Subcommittee on Descriptive Standards (TSDS) - Lynn Holdzkom
OCLC - Susan Westberg
RLG - Anne Van Camp
RLG EAD Advisory Group - Dennis Meissner
ALA Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access (CC:DA) - Susan Hamburger

III. Section Reports

Descriptive Notes - John Rees
Section Web Site - Diane Ducharme
Finding Aids Fair - Brad Westbrook

IV. Ongoing Business

Section-sponsored sessions on the 2002 program - Mary Lacy
Ideas for 2002 program sessions - Brad Westbrook
Amendment of bylaws (adding Coker Awards subcommittee service to duties of Chair)

V. New Business

VI. Election of Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect (results announced at the end of the program)

VII. Program

Jean Dryden, Editor and Project Manager of the Canadian/U.S. Taskforce on Archival Description (CUSTARD) project update, will give a presentation on the work of the CUSTARD project to date, including its recently published

"Statement of Principles", available at: http://www.archivists.org/news/custardproject.asp

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Section Endorsed Sessions

03. Teaching EAD: Multiple Perspectives
Thursday, August 22, 2002
1:30 PM-3:00 PM

In this session participants will compare training rationales, instructional design, learning objectives, and evaluation practices in various settings to determine the effectiveness of the instructional models currently used to teach this new descriptive encoding practice.

37. Introduction to METS: The Metadata Encoding Transmission Standard
Friday, August 23, 2002
3:00 PM-4:30 PM

METS is a generalized metadata framework, developed to encode the descriptive, administrative, and structural metadata for objects within a digital library. This panel will give an overview of the schema, and will provide insight into current usage, tools for creation and display, the relationship between EAD and METS, the importance of structural and administrative metadata, and how METS relates to other schemas. There will be plenty of time for questions and discussion.

Also Of Interest Ä

11. Archives Unplugged: Arrangement and Description
Thursday, August 22, 2002
3:30 PM-5:00 PM

This session will boil down the essential principles and practices that underpin archival arrangement and description. Six practical steps will be provided to guide attendees through the mysteries of developing basic, effective archival descriptions. Attendees will be provided with a range of examples and resources to support their own descriptive efforts.

Special Event
Metadata Matters: RLG Update on Current Metadata Initiatives
Wednesday, August 21, 2002
1:00 PM-5:00 PM

Participants will learn about and discuss the implications of a number of new metadata initiatives that have special relevance to the archival community. More information can be found at: http://www.rlg.org/primary/metadata_update02.html . Please RSVP to Fran Devlin at fed@notes.rlg.org.

Finding Aids Fair

Attendees to the SAA conference in Birmingham this August can stop by the Description Section's Finding Aids Fair to learn more about evolving practices for describing archival digital surrogates. Digital surrogates are a great benefit to researchers far and near. But describing digital surrogates is highly vexing because they are relatively new entities, because the rationale for description is not always clear, because there is little certainty how these items should interact with other materials, and because, perhaps most of all, their granularity goes against the time honored collection level practices of the archivist and manuscript curator.

This year's Finding Aid Fair will reveal some of the ways repositories are describing their digital surrogates and some

of the reasons and principles behind their descriptive practices. Repositories wishing to participate in the fair are encouraged to submit examples of the following kinds of resources that may be used in a local setting for describing archival digital surrogates:

- a list of data content and format standards adhered to;
- process description for creating digital surrogates locally;
- guidelines for applying metadata to digital objects including descriptive, administrative, and structural metadata;
- procedures for linking digital surrogates to the encoded collection finding aid;
- example descriptions of digital surrogates;
- account of ways in which digital surrogates can be accessed.

The Finding Aid Fair will be located in an exhibits booth on Thursday and Friday of this year's SAA conference. To contribute to the 2002 Finding Aids Fair, please contact Bradley Westbrook by e-mail (bdwestbrook@ucsd.edu) or by phone at (858) 822-0612. Best practice guidelines for digital objects and examples of digital object metadata may also be submitted by surface mail to Bradley Westbrook, UCAI Office, Geisel Library, UC-San Diego, La Jolla, CA 92093. A bibliography of submissions, with URLs for online resources, will be made available on the Web after SAA.

Section Officer Candidate Statements

Vice-Chair/Chair Elect
Stephen D. Miller

Director, Digital Library of Georgia

Stephen is currently the Director of the Digital Library of Georgia, a statewide digital library project focused on the historical and cultural materials of Georgia that is based at the University of Georgia Libraries. Prior to coming to Georgia, he worked at Duke University's Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library on a number of projects involving digitization of primary source materials and the creation of Duke's EAD finding aid database during the development of the Encoded Archival Description (EAD) standard. He holds a Masters of Science in Library Science from the University of Kentucky School of Library and Information Science and has been a SAA member since 1995.

Christopher J. Prom

Assistant University Archivist, University of Illinois

Chris' professional duties include assisting the University Archivist appraise records and manuscripts, overseeing the transfer of materials to the Archives, supervising processing activities, and managing digital projects, including the preparation of EAD finding aids. He is also a co-Principal Investigator on the University of Illinois Metadata Harvesting (Open Archives Initiative) Project. Chris serves on SAA's Technical Subcommittee on Descriptive Standards as well. His publications include "Extending the Capabilities of the EAD Cookbook" (OCLC Systems and Services 17:2) and "Using the Open Archives Initiatives Protocols with EAD" (Joint Conference on Digital Libraries 2002 Proceedings). Forthcoming are two articles related to description and a biography of Charles Gosnell (Dictionary of American Library Biography, 2nd Supplement. Chris holds a M.A. in history from Marquette University and is a Ph.D. candidate in history at the University of Illinois.

Voting will take place during the Section meeting.

News Notes

New Web Sites

Check out these new sites. Your colleagues worked hard over the past year to create a variety of research and outreach tools, such as finding aids and interactive web sites.

- The University of Louisville produced its first comprehensive guide to its Special Collections from all libraries last year. A web-accessible version is now available at: http://special.library.louisville.edu/index.stm .This includes the full text of the print version and additions, and will be updated as time passes. The Guide contains descriptions of the photographic collections, which includes the Standard Oil (New Jersey) Collection; the Rare Books and Manuscripts Department, which includes the Edgar Rice Burroughs Collection; the University Archives, and the Medical, Music, Art and Law Library special collections. The Guide is searchable and browsable, and links related collections by topic. More detailed information on selected collections, including databases, finding aids, and images, can be found at the Kentucky Virtual Library, http://digilib.kyvl.org:80/dynaweb/oak/klgead/@Generic__CollectionView

- The University of Virginia's Claude Moore Health Sciences Library opened the Philip S. Hench Walter Reed Yellow Fever Collection website, marking the completion of a two-year project funded in part by a $250,041 National Leadership Grant from the IMLS. The project identified, digitized, transcribed, preserved, created enhanced search options, and now provides web access to over 5,500 documents, photographs, and artifacts in the Library's archive on Walter Reed and yellow fever. The project team, led by Joan Echtenkamp Klein, worked closely with David Seaman, Director of the Electronic Text Center at the UVA Library. Visit the site at: http://yellowfever.lib.virginia.edu Contact Joan Echtenkamp Klein at (434) 924-0052 or JRE@hscmail.mcc.virginia.edu

- Archives of the American Association for the Advancement of Science is the oldest general scientific society in the United States. Its new web site (http://archives.aaas.org) features a searchable database of people, meetings, documents, publications, awards, and descriptions of collections. An online exhibit, "150 Years of Advancing Science: A History of AAAS," highlights photos, journals, and other historical documents from the sesquicentennial celebration in 1998. The Web site also includes a special exhibit of the memoranda of AAAS Treasurer William T. Golden, who served from 1969?1999. Golden advised President Truman on the organization of scientific research and development throughout the government. Accompanying text highlights the significance of his work, and a searchable database references over 200 documents. Contact Amy Crumpton, AAAS Research Archivist, AAAS, 1200 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C., 202?326?679, acrumpto@aaas.org, for more information or to schedule an appointment.

- The Georgia Institute of Technology Archives & Special Collections announces their new website (http://archives.aaas.org). The website features encoded finding aids for many of the Archives' collections, with new finding aids added weekly. The website offers additional resources, including a timeline of Georgia Tech history and answers to frequently asked reference questions. Georgia Tech: Telling It Like It Was presents oral histories, in digital video format, of alumni, faculty, and administrators recounting their experiences at Georgia Tech. The finding aid for the papers of Joseph Ford, a prominent physicist, includes a link to a dedicated website. The American Institute of Physics funded the arrangement and description of this collection, which documents Ford's seminal work in the field of chaos, as well as his campus activism.

Grants and Projects

Northwest Digital Archives Funded by NEH

The National Endowment for the Humanities has awarded $350,000 for establishment of the Northwest Digital Archives (NWDA). The 2-year project (to begin on July 1, 2002) will provide enhanced access to archival and manuscript materials in Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington through a union database of Encoded Archival Description (EAD) finding aids. The database will provide consistent and integrated access to 2,200 finding aids for

regionally significant primary source materials in the Northwest.

Many of the participating institutions lie within the Columbia River watershed, giving the records they hold a geographic unity that extends beyond the borders of the individual states. Significant subject commonalities include the major economic forces in the region - agriculture, forest products, fisheries, and natural resources; urban and rural social and progressive movements; local, state, regional, and national politics; outdoor recreation; Native American language and culture; and the place of religious communities in the region. In many ways, the separate collections at the participating institutions represent one massive interrelated collection that documents the political, cultural, and natural history of the Northwest region.

Oregon State University is the lead institution on the 2-year grant project. Participating institutions are Washington State University (which will host the database and provide the technical infrastructure), University of Washington, Washington State Archives, Seattle Municipal Archives, Center for Pacific Northwest Studies (Western Washington University), Pacific Lutheran University, Whitworth College, Oregon Historical Society, University of Oregon, University of Idaho, Montana Historical Society, and University of Montana. Larry Landis is the Consortium Director and Elizabeth Nielsen is the Consortium Manager. Questions about the NWDA can be directed to either Larry (larry.landis@orst.edu; 541-737-0540) or Elizabeth (Elizabeth.Nielsen@orst.edu; 541-737-0543). A preliminary project website is available at http://nwda.wsulibs.wsu.edu .

Advisory Group Is Revising RLG EAD Guidelines
Dennis Meissner, chair

Shortly after the 2001 SAA annual meeting, RLG constituted an EAD Advisory Group that it tasked to revise the existing guidelines for encoding EAD finding aids to be included in its Archival Resources database. There are three principal reasons for doing so at this juncture: 1) an awareness that encoding practices had evolved considerably since pioneering repositories had begun submitted finding aids under the original 1998 RLG encoding guidelines; 2) an appreciation that the community of EAD practitioners had grown markedly since then, including notably a significant expansion outside the United States; and 3) the knowledge that the impending release of version 2 of the EAD DTD would of itself require changes in the encoding guidelines.

RLG Program Officer Merrilee Proffitt assembled a group of nine other experienced EAD users to evaluate and rework the existing guidelines. They are Greg Kinney (Bentley Library, University of Michigan), Mary Lacy (Library of Congress), Dennis Meissner (Minnesota Historical Society), Naomi Nelson (Emory University), Richard Rinehart (Berkeley Art Museum/Pacific Film Archive), David Ruddy (Cornell University), William Stockting (Public Records Office, United Kingdom), Michael Webb (Bodleian Library, Oxford), and Timothy Young (Beinecke Library, Yale).

In discussing their charge the advisory group members settled on a couple key objectives. One is to identify, and guide the use of, a *minimal* set of EAD elements and attributes that, taken together, are complete enough to assure that information in finding aids is adequate to serve users' needs and yet lean enough so as not to impose excessive encoding overhead on creators. This, in itself, has proved daunting, though the group has recently succeeded in assembling its recommended set. The second objective is to assure that the guidelines stand a reasonable chance of meeting the needs of an international encoding community. In so doing, the advisory group has had to be as sensitive to the requirements of ISAD(G) as it has to those of APPM, MARC, and other descriptive standards more familiar to Americans. This has meant more work for the group, but it should help ensure a product that will facilitate interoperability in an international context, and which will be consistent with the outcome of the CUSTARD project. In addressing these challenges, the advisory group went beyond its initial mandate and has sought to articulate a set of best practice guidelines for EAD encoding in a union environment.

The draft guidelines, which are currently being fine-tuned by an editorial subcommittee of the advisory group, treat the full hierarchy of EAD elements and their attributes. They identify mandatory sets of elements and attributes within the <eadheader>, <archdesc>, and <dsc> areas of the structure, and consider description from the fonds/collection level all the way down to (optional) item-level control. Further, the guidelines go beyond what the group felt to be mandatory

and recommend additional encoding that the group considers to represent best practices for describing archival materials within the EAD environment.

As soon as the draft guidelines are edited, the group intends to distribute them to a number of outside reviewers for comment. The finalized document will then be announced and made publicly available on the RLG website. If you have questions about this project, or if you would be interested in seeing the draft guidelines during the review period, please contact Merrilee Proffitt (mgp@notes.rlg.org ; 650-691-2309) or me (dennis.meissner@mnhs.org; 651-296-2496).

Goodbye to Diana Smith, Web Liaison

Diana recently left for her new life in England and thus had to relinquish her duties as the Section's webmaster. Diana volunteered to produce and host the website from its inception, and I am sure we want to thank her for all her hard work over the years. Diane Ducharme, also an archivist in the Beinecke's Manuscript Unit, is taking over web duties. The new address is: http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/descr/ . Contact Diane at Yale: diane.ducharme@yale.edu

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Get Ready for Birmingham!!!

Description Section Meeting, Friday 23rd 8:00-10:00 AM