

# Descriptive Notes



The Newsletter of the Description Section of the Society of American Archivists	Winter 2005

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### FROM THE CHAIR

Kelcy Shepherd, University of Massachusetts

Happy New Year!

The turn of the year is a time of beginnings and endings, of looking back and looking forward. For those of us interested in description, the release of *Describing Archives: A Content Standard* was one of the important milestones of the last year. For me personally, 2004 marked the completion of a three and half year EAD/MARC retrospective conversion project and the start of my service to you as Section Chair.

Often, the passing of a new year prompts us to identify changes we'd like to make. But, it should also be an opportunity to celebrate our achievements. As archivists, our contribution to our institutions, our communities, and our society is at times poorly recognized and understood. We do, however, have the opportunity to be recognized for our contribution to our profession, through the Society of American Archivists awards competition. The C.F.W. Coker award is particularly relevant to those of us who are active and interested in archival description.

Established in 1984 to honor the memory of SAA Fellow C.F.W. Coker, the award recognizes finding aids, projects involving innovative development in archival description, or descriptive systems and tools that enable archivists to produce effective finding aids. Nominees must set national standards, represent a model for archival description, or otherwise have a substantial impact on descriptive practices. More information is available on the SAA web site: <http://www.archivists.org/governance/handbook/section12-coker.asp>

As Chair of the Description Section, I have the honor of being an ex officio member of the Coker Award Subcommittee. I look forward to reviewing the applications and learning more about exemplary descriptive work being carried out by fellow archivists nationwide. The Coker Award acknowledges those who make our descriptive work easier and more efficient by developing new models and tools for archival description. We have all benefited from procedures, standards, guidelines, or tools that our colleagues have shared with us, and this is an opportunity to recognize those efforts. If you are aware of an archivist, institution, or project who meets the qualifications of the Coker award, I strongly encourage you to complete the nomination process.

This issue of Descriptive Notes also provides news of recent archival accomplishments from around the country, including the acquisition of new collections, the completion of retrospective conversion projects, and the availability of finding aids online. I hope that you'll find something here to inspire you in your own descriptive work.

### 2005 Leadership List

Kelcy Shepherd, Chair  
Katherine Wisser, Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect  
Diane Ducharme, Web Liaison  
John Rees, Newsletter Editor

### Steering Committee/Members At Large

Christopher Burns  
Mary Lacy  
Jerry Simmons

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## NEWS NOTES

### **Discover the Sources of Northwest History: Northwest Digital Archives**

<http://nwda.wsulibs.wsu.edu/>

The Northwest Digital Archives (NWDA) is an online searchable database of more than 2300 guides to primary sources at 13 research institutions in Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. The primary materials represent a wide range of topics in Northwest history, including environment and natural resources; mining; Native Americans; overland journeys and pioneers; missionaries; government and politics; and the arts and humanities. The guides describe architectural drawings, artifacts; letters, diaries, and other personal papers; business, government, and organization records; maps; moving images; oral histories; sound recordings; and photographs.

All guides in the database are in compliance with Encoded Archival Description version 2002. In order to provide further consistency to finding aids from institutions with widely varying descriptive practices, the NWDA customized encoding guidelines developed by other consortia (RLG and the OAC) to form the NWDA Best Practice Guidelines for EAD (<http://nwda.wsulibs.wsu.edu/temp/bestpract.pdf>)

In addition to keyword searching, users of the NWDA site may browse finding aids by:

- NWDA category (topic, place, or type of material) through “pre-defined” searches
- Repository
- Title

Users may preview search results in a “Hits in Context” view that doesn’t require loading the full guide. A printer-friendly version of each guide is also available.

Archivists and catalog librarians at the University of Washington and Oregon State University are developing tools for extraction of MARC records from the XML (EAD) documents for loading to local and union on-line catalogs.

Institutions currently represented are: Montana Historical Society Archives; Oregon Historical Society Research Library; Oregon State University Libraries, University Archives; Oregon State University Libraries, Special Collections; Pacific Lutheran University Archives and Special Collections; Seattle Municipal Archives; University of Idaho Library Special Collections and Archives; University of Montana Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library; University of Oregon Libraries,; University of Washington Libraries; Washington State Archives; Washington State University Libraries Manuscripts, Archives and Special Collections; Western Washington University Center for Pacific Northwest Studies; and Whitworth College.

The NWDA was established in 2002 with funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities and National Historical Publications and Records Commission. The Northwest Digital Archives will continue to grow as current institutional partners contribute more guides to primary source collections. Plans also are underway to expand the project to more institutions.

For more information about the Northwest Digital Archives, contact Larry Landis, NWDA consortium director, at Oregon State University, [larry.landis@oregonstate.edu](mailto:larry.landis@oregonstate.edu).

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**UNC-Chapel Hill Cataloging Project**

Ruta Schuller

Davis Library

Catalogers at the UNC-Chapel Hill University Library have completed the retrospective conversion of the microfilm titles in the Microforms Collection, with the exception of a few hundred cyrillic and CJK titles yet to be converted. The Microforms Collection contains a vast and diverse range of materials with over one million items on microfilm and other microform formats. On microfilm are large collections of medieval and renaissance manuscripts, literary materials and United States and foreign government documents; microfilmed editions of the papers of prominent individuals and organizations; and a variety of books, including rare-editions, pamphlets, archival collections and papers, magazines, scholarly journals and photographs.

The Microforms Collection can be accessed at: <http://www.lib.unc.edu/reference/microforms>.

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### **New Collection Descriptions, NYPL**

William Stingone

The Manuscripts and Archives Division at the New York Public Library is pleased to announce the availability of its new Collection Descriptions and Guides web page. The page allows our researchers to simultaneously search the text of nearly 1300 collection-level catalog records and over 250 finding aids. The finding aids are delivered either in HTML via our Dynaweb server or in pdf format. We invite all section members and their interested colleagues to have a look at the site:

<http://www.nypl.org/research/chss/spe/rbk/collect.cfm>

We welcome any comments or suggestions for improvements. Please email [mssref@nypl.org](mailto:mssref@nypl.org).

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### **City of Boston Archives EAD Project**

Sheila R. Spalding

Project Archivist

The City of Boston Archives is currently working on a series of EAD encoded finding aids for the Desegregation-era Records Project, an NHPRC funded project. These finding aids will be the first online finding aids the Archives has published and will be available on the city archives website by the end of January, 2005. More information on the project and a preliminary finding aid may be found at:

<<http://www.cityofboston.gov/archivesandrecords/desegregation>>.

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### **Improved Access to CHS' Manuscripts Collections**

Mary Morganti

Director of Library & Archives

California Historical Society

The California Historical Society recently completed a 2.5-year project designed to improve access to manuscripts collections in the North Baker Research Library. Funded by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), the grant enabled us to create 1100 electronic catalog records, representing about a third of the collections by call number, but more than half in terms of importance and quantity. Our records reside in RLIN and

can be found in MELVYL, the University of California's on-line catalog, which is the primary online public access point for the CHS Library's holdings. The card catalog and shelf-lists that previously served as the primary access tools for manuscripts and photography collections still remain available in the library's reading room because the indexing they contain continues to be useful. Meanwhile, we continue to add to the steady accumulation of electronic records into the online catalog in order to provide more accurate, complete, up-to-date, and accessible information about our collections, whether from the library's reading room or remotely via the Internet. Visit MELVYL on the Web at <http://melvyl.cdlib.org> to learn more about some of the treasures that can be found at CHS.

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## CATALOGING AND METADATA NEWS

John Rees

Newsletter Editor

Beginning Nov. 15, 2004, MARC21 catalogers were able to begin using the subject source code 'dacs', thus marking the North American cataloging world's official acceptance of *Describing Archives: A Content Standard* as the archival community's descriptive authority (see Library of Congress Technical Notice, Sept. 15, 2004). Also of note in the same Technical Notice, was the approval of the *Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum Directory of Airplanes* (smda) as a subject source. You will recall that Patricia Williams presented an excellent introduction to SMDA during last year's Description Section business meeting.

I'm sure already seen many of us have already seen the recent Library of Congress announcement of its new Web-based learning center to promote core competency curriculum development for 21st century cataloging practitioners. The Cataloger's Learning Workshop <http://www.loc.gov/catworkshop/> is a cataloging and metadata training resource portal that features a discussion group, links to cataloging training providers and publishers, online training courses and suggested readings in bibliographic control. The Cataloger's Learning Workshop is hosted by the Cataloging Distribution Service (CDS) of the Library of Congress.

The Cataloger's Learning Workshop grew out of an effort that began at the 2000 Library of Congress conference "Bibliographic Control for the New Millennium." Like many organizations, library's will soon experience a shortage in professional catalogers; specialized catalogers like manuscript and visual materials catalogers are expected to suffer even greater shortages due to an already small professional pool. Such technical knowledge and expertise is not always the foremost skill taught at library schools these days, so I encourage everyone to investigate the services LOC offers, as well as look to mentor someone already on your staff or another newbie archivist you may know. I also encourage you to volunteer for the ALCTS Mentoring Pilot Project (<http://www.ala.org/ala/alctscontent/catalogingsection/catcommittees/educationtrainin/educationtraining.htm>) A special call for special collections catalogers was made in April 2004 when during the original matching phase it was discovered that there was a severe shortage of mentors from our profession.

Finally, for those who attend ALA, look on the program for a session entitled "MODS, MARC, and Metadata Interoperability (Monday, June 27; <http://www.ala.org/ala/alcts/alctsconted/alctsceevents/alctsannual/modsmarcprog.htm>). Universities, museums, government agencies, and other institutions, are increasingly interested in getting the most return on investment from the wide-variety of oftentimes disparate scanning, metadata, and cataloging activities happening throughout, across, and between their functional units. The need to coordinate, monitor, and manage the intellectual output from these ventures only fosters better discovery and use by our customers. Libraries are the natural nexus for such coordination and management efforts and this is an excellent opportunity for archivists and special collections librarians to contribute and advance professionally.

## Report on CC:DA meeting at Midwinter ALA, Boston, Mass., Jan. 14-17, 2004

Mary Lacy, Library of Congress | SAA CC:DA Liaison

AACR revision dominated both meetings of the Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access and its "omnibus" meeting of task forces working on aspects of AACR3. A December 2004 draft of Part I (covering rules for description) was released by the Joint Steering Committee for Revision of AACR3 for constituency review by CC:DA committee members, liaisons and the organizations they represent, SAA and its descriptive standards subcommittee, TSDS.

The draft of Part I of AACR3 has not been made publicly available. However, the JSC and CC:DA are very interested in comments from working catalogers on the main issues reflected in the draft. To make such comments possible, a background document has been prepared that explains the objectives and principles of the draft and some of its major features, along with instructions for submitting comments; it is available at

<http://www.libraries.psu.edu/tas/jca/ccda/docs/chair22.pdf>. Comments may be sent to the SAA liaison, Mary Lacy (mlac@loc.gov); comments received before February 11 will be forwarded to CC:DA. Of special note for our community is that rules pertaining to resources in an unpublished form and assembled collections formerly found in Chapter 4 (Unpublished Material) have been incorporated into the general rules.

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## FEATURE ARTICLE

### A Splendid Little Collection

Andrew Mangravite

Chemical Heritage Foundation

Howard Berkey Bishop was a man of many parts. Trained as an analytical chemist and one of the founders of General Chemical Co.'s Laurel Hill Laboratory Analytical Group (an early example of an industrial roundtable group), he invented an analytical instrument called the electrotitrimeter to test the concentration of an electrolyte and patented a new method for the production of hydrofluoric acid. European sales of these patents made Bishop wealthy enough to set himself up as a manufacturer and he controlled or ran several companies simultaneously before semi-retiring from business in 1940 to devote himself to his real interest. Bishop was a passionate believer in the deleterious effects of nicotine, caffeine and alcohol upon the human body. Using his own fortune, he created the Human Engineering Foundation to spread the news about "A Better Way of Life." A veritable flood of material designed for lecture halls and for weekly newspaper publication followed, with the sharply-written, alluringly-illustrated handbill becoming his weapon of choice. He was still hard at this second career at the time of his death in 1962.

A small but significant selection of Bishop's records and memorabilia was recently donated to the Chemical Heritage Foundation by his son Vernon shortly before his own death. The collection allows all of these facets of Bishop's life and career to shine. We see Bishop as a small boy writing gushing letters to his beloved grandmother. We hear Bishop's farmer-uncle admonishing him as a young man leaving home to study in the big city (Chicago) to be wary of its allures and traps. We read the letters Bishop's fiancée Bertha Shaffner sent him from her home in West Philadelphia and we get a glimpse of the privileged lifestyle of the upper middle classes in the years before the Great War. We study the extensive business records of the John C. Wiarda Co., owned by Bishop from 1921 to 1929, and we gain intimate knowledge of the ins-and-outs of managing a small manufacturer of specialty chemicals in the boom years of the Twenties. Lastly, we marvel at the sheer amount of dedication and energy Bishop the Human Engineer put into his final life's work. The crusader for clean living wrote to everyone from Douglas MacArthur and President Dwight David Eisenhower to George Bernard Shaw and cartoonist H.T. Webster (creator of the once-popular character "The Timid Soul"), usually to admonish them for smoking and/or drinking in public, thus setting a bad example for youth. He wrote and, the times being more innocent, with civility the rule rather than the exception, they

actually responded to him—in Webster's case, via a cartoon strip.

An intriguing selection of family photographs (before he turned to chemistry, Bishop entertained thoughts of becoming a professional photographer) accompanied this most attractive small collection. A related collection can be found at the National Library of Medicine, and a finding aid is now available for the CHF material. Collections don't come any nicer than The Papers of Howard B. Bishop!

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