Descriptive Notes

FROM THE CHAIR   **Erin Lawrimore**

The heat and humidity in North Carolina have reached disgusting levels … meaning it's almost time for the SAA annual meeting!

Our meeting in D.C. is chocked full of description-related activities. Kicking off on Monday, August 9, a pre-conference -- "EAC-CPF: Moving Forward with Authority" -- will focus on implementation of EAC-CPF and the importance of authority control in archival description. The Research Forum on Tuesday will feature presentations of ongoing research and innovation from across the archival community. Beginning on Thursday, the annual meeting will contain many sessions focused on description activities, including:

- Session 102, "Structured Data is Essential for Archival Description and Discovery: True or False?"
- Session 206, "Is EAD too Complex? Breaking Down Barriers to EAD Implementation"
- Session 502, "Not on Google? It Doesn't Exist: Findability and Search Engine Optimization for Archives"
- Session 604, "Bibliographic Control of Archival Materials: The Impact of Library Standards on Archives"

Our Description Section meeting will take place on Friday, August 13, from 1-3 p.m. Our featured presentation will focus on a recent study at North Carolina State University that sought to address how we can measure metadata creation and use in a meaningful way. Joyce Chapman will discuss the study and her attempts to contrast metadata creation not against traditional monetary cost, but against benefit as embodied by the user experience. She performed a detailed timing analysis of metadata gathering and encoding processes, and a usability study with advanced researchers focused on use of different elements of archival description. Initial findings, as well as next steps, will be presented and discussed.

Additionally, we will have reports from section leaders, committees, liaisons, and related groups, and we will introduce our new section leaders, including a new Vice Chair/Chair-Elect. As in past years, we encourage representatives and liaisons reporting at the Section meeting to provide reports in advance so they may be posted on the Section website, allowing us to read the reports before the meeting and keep to our appointed meeting time. If you have reports or items for the meeting agenda, please contact me at Erin_Lawrimore@ncsu.edu.

Enjoy the newsletter, and I look forward to seeing everyone in D.C.!

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FROM THE VICE CHAIR   **Jerry Simmons**

This is a special message to the Description Section membership! Please consider making your latest finding aid or description project a part of the SAA 2010 Description Expo. Just as last year, the Description Expo will be web-based again and looks to showcase exemplary archival descriptions, demonstrating the latest trends and approaches in the implementation of traditional and emerging technologies. Remember that the 2010 meeting will be a joint gathering of SAA, COSA and NAGARA memberships, so we expect unique and diverse entries.

The Description Section leadership will continue to accept entries for the Expo through July 31, 2010. As we did in 2009, the Description Section will present candidate projects via the Description Section website with no display table at the annual conference in Washington, D.C. If you have a project to enter, please send a brief project description to me at jerry.simmons@nara.gov.

I also wanted to remind everyone of the EAC-related preconference meeting to be hosted by the National Archives and Records Administration on August 9, 2010. There are still openings left, and there is no registration fee! A full announcement with program schedule and featured speakers can be found below in the News & Notes section of this newsletter. See you in D.C.!

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2009-2010 LEADERSHIP LIST	**STEERING COMMITTEE**
Erin Lawrimore, Chair	Christine de Catanzaro
Jerry Simmons, Vice Chair/Chair Elect	Jennifer Meehan
James Roth, Immediate Past Chair	John Nemmers
Donnelly Lancaster Walton, Secretary	Claudia Thompson
Janet Carleton, Web Liaison	
Sarah Keen, Newsletter Editor	Tom Hyry, Council Liaison

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NEWS & NOTES

EAC-CPF: Moving Forward with Authority
Location: National Archives and Records Administration (Archives I)
                McGowan Theater and Conference Center
                700 Constitution Avenue, N.W. (between 9th and 7th Streets)
                Washington, D.C. 20408-0001
Date: Monday, August 9, 2010
Time: 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. (entry as early as 8:00 a.m.)

Updated information for traveling to the National Archives (A1) facility:
The National Archives (A1) building is located between 9th and 7th Streets and between Constitution and Pennsylvania Avenues in Northwest, Washington, D.C. Preconference participants should plan to arrive between 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. Those riding Metro should use the Archives/Navy Memorial/Penn Quarter station. Once outside the station, cross the intersection of Pennsylvania Avenue and 7th Street, and follow 7th Street to the Constitution Avenue entrance. Enter the building at the Visitor Group/Special Event doors closest to the intersection of Constitution Avenue and 7th

Street. Easily identifiable National Archives staff will be on hand to direct participants and answer questions. Though food and drinks are not allowed in the McGowan Theater, the Archives 1 Café will be open and available for lunch and refreshments during break times.

With the release of the Encoded Archival Context - Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families (EAC-CPF) schema in March of 2010, questions regarding implementation are looming large within the American archival community. The National Archives and Records Administration is hosting a preconference that will bring together stakeholders to discuss the important role that authority control plays in archival description and strategies for implementing EAC-CPF in order to continue the ongoing transformation and enhancement of archival description.

The preconference will consider U.S., European, and Australian EAC-CPF initiatives and projects, and also explore the potential for collaboration with the Virtual International Authority File and the library and museum communities. Primary objectives for the day will be to answer two key questions: Why should my archive or library implement EAC-CPF? What are practical strategies for implementing EAC-CPF? Panel discussions and break-out sessions will constitute the schedule for the day. Questions about the developing schedule and program content can be addressed to Kathy Wisser at the email below.

There is no charge, and we encourage all interested information professionals and students to attend. Though there are no charges or formal registration, preconference organizers would like to have a running count of attendees. If you plan to attend EAC-CPF: Moving Forward with Authority, please email Kathy Wisser katherine.wisser@simmons.edu.

Featured speakers and panelists on the program include: Daniel Pitti, University of Virginia; Angelika Menne-Harwitz, Bundesarchiv; Anila Angjeli, Bibliothèque nationale de France; Ana Cristan, Library of Congress; and Patricia Harpring, The Getty.

Special discussion sessions will cover: levels of implementation (global, national, regional, local); consortium building; sustainability; and learning from European and Australian models.

Call for Submissions: MARAC's Arline Custer Memorial Award and C. Herbert Finch Award

DEADLINE JULY 31, 2010

The Arline Custer Memorial Award Committee encourages entries by individual authors or institutions in the MARAC region for the 2010 Arline Custer Memorial Award, recognizing books and articles, and the 2010 C. Herbert Finch Award, highlighting online publications. Works must be relevant to the general public as well as the archival community and preference will be given to work by archivists.

Works under consideration for the Arline Custer Memorial Award include, but are not limited to, monographs, popular narratives, reference works and exhibition catalogs using archival sources. Individuals or institutions may submit up to two works published between July 1, 2009 and June 30, 2010. Up to two awards may be given, with a maximum value of $200.00 for books and $100.00 for articles.

The C. Herbert Finch Award seeks entries that support and promote the use of archival materials such as virtual exhibitions, web sites and web pages. Submissions are judged on content, navigability, usability, functionality, and site design. To be eligible for the award, an online publication must have a

stable internet address and must have been published between January 1, 2010 and June 30, 2010. One award will be given with a maximum value of $250.00.

ALL ENTRIES MUST BE RECEIVED BY JULY 31, 2010.

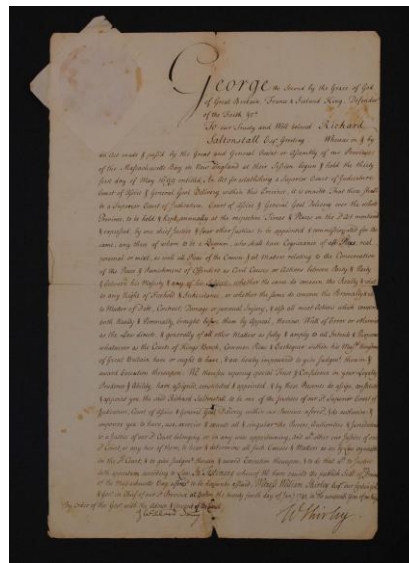The 2010 awards will be announced at the Fall 2010 Conference in Harrisburg, PA.

Submission Guidelines for both Awards are available online:
http://www.marac.info/mc/page.do?sitePageId=93998&orgId=marac

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Butter, Earthquakes, Jailbreaks, and Sermons: Cataloging Hidden Collections in the Harvard University Archives
Jennifer Pelose, Harvard University Archives

Archivists at Harvard University have uncovered many unexpected topics among hidden collections during a one-year project to describe and preserve 17th- and 18th-century holdings. The Harvard University Archives, with more than 50,000 linear feet of material ranging from 1636 to the present, is the largest collection of archival and manuscript material at the University. The project, made possible through the generous support of the Arcadia Fund, encompasses a wide range of manuscript and print materials. Over 1,260 items – including diaries, commonplace books, legal documents, correspondence, personal papers, University records, drawings, paintings, maps, scientific observations, lectures, printed books and broadsides, a medal, musical scores, student works, and satirical poetry – are included. The project's aim is twofold: to provide content-rich access to previously hidden or under-described collections through the creation of MARC records and EAD finding aids, and to stabilize damaged or fragile items for future digitization.

Project work has involved collection surveys, enhanced description, and preservation work. Taking a cue from research that demonstrates the value of content-rich descriptive metadata to optimize access and discovery, two project archivists are working in tandem with two graduate students in early American history. As the archivists process each collection, they flag materials that warrant a closer reading or additional background research by the graduate students. The project archivists incorporate the results in catalog records and finding aids. As a final step, project conservators at the Harvard

University Library's [Weissman Preservation Center](#) repair and clean at-risk items identified by the archivists.

These materials provide rich, varied, and extensive information about the cultural, social, economic, legal, religious and political history of New England over two centuries, allowing insight into the material culture of colonial life, the costs of goods and services, the books that influenced thought and education, the legal and social concerns of citizens, and myriad other aspects of life in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Materials cataloged so far include the [John Hancock Collection](#); [Richard Saltonstall's commission](#) as Justice of the Superior Court of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay (see photo), issued by King George II in 1745; the papers of colonial scientist and professor [Samuel Williams](#); [Records of Grants for Work among the Indians](#), related to missionaries sent to Stockbridge and Oneida settlements; the diaries of [Benjamin Guild](#) and [Elias Mann](#); and several rare printed volumes, among a wide range of print and manuscript materials. In the first four months of the project, over one hundred and fifty MARC records and a dozen finding aids were created or updated and are now accessible online through Harvard's [HOLLIS](#) and [OASIS](#) catalogs.

For more information, please contact project manager [Jennifer Pelose](#).

News from SJSU Special Collections & Archives
Danelle Moon, SJSU Special Collections & Archives

San Jose State University is wrapping up a two-year basic cataloging grant from the NHPRC to process over 80 collections related to the history of the university and personal and organizational records. This grant project has resulted in new access to our archival holdings through OCLC and through the Online Archives of California. We recently applied for an NHPRC detailed processing grant, which was awarded this past month. The grant award of $99,709 will enable SJSU to fully process the John C. Gordon Photographic Collection and the Ted Sahl Photographic Collection. The grant will provide the funding needed to improve access to the collection, and will result in the preservation and digitization of 500 nitrate panorama negatives that depict the agricultural history of Santa Clara County, California.

Minnesota Historical Society Awarded NHPRC Basic Project Grant
Dennis Meissner, Minnesota Historical Society

The Minnesota Historical Society (MHS) is pleased to announce its receipt of a Basic Project grant from the NHPRC in the amount of $193,357, which will significantly support, by hiring three archival processors, a $500,000, 18-month project to process the Society's unprocessed archival collections. The project targets a 4,600 cubic foot aggregation of government records and manuscript collections, which are largely hidden from our audiences. By arranging and describing these collections and series to generally accepted minimal standards, using economical practices that are now well tested, we expect to make our archival holdings web-discoverable, and to drive reading room use at MHS significantly. The project will become the focus of the archival processing staff's work through 2011. Project staff expect to produce or revise at least 500 MARC21 catalog records and 300 EAD finding aids over the course of the project. A retrieval analysis of archival materials has been underway for the past year and will be used to help evaluate the audience impact of rapidly exposing more archival materials to web-scale discovery and access. We are grateful to the NHPRC for giving us this opportunity to get our backlog off the pallets, onto the stack shelves, and into the audience discovery space.

Finding Aid Available for the Brown Brothers Harriman Collection
Celia Hartmann, The New-York Historical Society

The New-York Historical Society has made available the fully searchable finding aid for its newly processed Brown Brothers Harriman Collection. You can find it at

http://dlib.nyu.edu/findingaids/html/nyhs/brownbrothersharriman.html

The collection, arranged in 10 series, includes some of the naturally occurring records of Brown Brothers Harriman and its predecessor companies' business activities, and papers from some of those companies' partners. These include original, photocopied, and transcribed correspondence; ledgers and account books; records of international business transactions; daybooks, correspondence, and diaries of Brown Brothers' partners, both personal and professional; scrapbooks; newspaper and magazine clippings, and other publicity materials; prints, photographs, and other visual materials including a portfolio commissioned from photographer Walker Evans; audiotapes; artifacts; and a reference library of published and privately printed material about the Brown family, its business interests, and other background information.

Donated to the Society in 1970, the Collection was amassed by Barnard professor and author John A. Kouwenhoven in the mid-1960s, primarily as research materials to support the writing of *Partners in Banking*. Published in 1968, the book celebrated the firm's 150th anniversary and documented the firm's evolution from a commodities import and export firm based in Baltimore, to a multinational private bank that is the oldest in the United States.

Processing of the Collection was made possible by a generous grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission in 2009.

New Student Database Project from the Litchfield Historical Society
Linda Hocking, Litchfield Historical Society

The Litchfield Historical Society invites you to participate in an exciting new project. In September 2009, the Society began a two year venture to create an online searchable database of all documented students of Litchfield Female Academy and the Litchfield Law School. Funding for the project is provided by the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the Council on Library and Information Resources, the Connecticut Humanities Council, and the Seherr-Thoss Foundation.

The database, titled the *Ledger*, will present the stories of these institutions, their founders and students. In 1784 Tapping Reeve opened the Litchfield Law School, the first in America. It attracted over 1,200 students from 13 states and territories to study in Litchfield. Graduates formed a network of leadership and influence that encompassed public service, business, and other areas of American life. In 1792 Sarah Pierce founded a pioneer institution of female education in America. Her innovative curriculum of academic, practical, and ornamental courses expanded the world of the estimated 3,000 girls who attended the Litchfield Female Academy over its 41 year history.

The words, artwork, and personal belongings of the students and instructors will be brought together with biographical and genealogical information. Some documents, like diplomas or journals, will have item pages while others will be presented as part of collection level descriptions. Many will show images, and links to complete finding aids created in Archon will also be presented on the page.

Students travelled from around the country and the world to attend these schools. Their result is that their records and artifacts are scattered across the nation in various repositories and private collections. The Society seeks information about any related materials which could be included in the *Ledger*. For further details about the project, a complete list of students, or to submit information to be included please contact the curator, Julie Frey, at curator@litchfieldhistoricalsociety.org or archivist, Linda Hocking, at archivist@litchfieldhistoricalsociety.org.

Visualization of the Metadata Universe
Jenn Riley, Digital Library Program, Indiana University – Bloomington

The sheer number of metadata standards in the cultural heritage sector is overwhelming, and their inter-relationships further complicate the situation. A new resource, Seeing Standards: A Visualization of the Metadata Universe, <http://www.dlib.indiana.edu/~jenlrile/metadatamap/>, is intended to assist planners with the selection and implementation of metadata standards. Seeing Standards is in two parts: (1) a poster-sized visualization plotting standards based on their applicability in a variety of contexts, and (2) a glossary of metadata standards in either poster or pamphlet form.

Each of the 105 standards listed is evaluated on its strength of application to defined categories in each of four axes: community, domain, function, and purpose. Standards more strongly allied with a category are displayed towards the center of each hemisphere, and those still applicable but less

strongly allied are displayed along the edges. The strength of a standard in a given category is determined by a mixture of its adoption in that category, its design intent, and its overall appropriateness for use in that category.

The standards represented are among those most heavily used or publicized in the cultural heritage community, though certainly not all standards that might be relevant are included. A small set of the metadata standards plotted on the main visualization also appear as highlights above the graphic. These represent the most commonly known or discussed standards for cultural heritage metadata.

Work preparing Seeing Standards was supported by a professional development grant from the Indiana University Libraries. Content was developed by Jenn Riley, Metadata Librarian in the Indiana University Digital Library Program. Design work was performed by Devin Becker of the Indiana University School of Library and Information Science, and soon to be Digital Initiatives & Scholarly Communications Librarian at the University of Idaho.

Reference and Processing Collaboration Group of the RAO Section Update

The Reference and Processing Collaboration Group of the Reference, Access, and Outreach Section has recently updated its stated goals and objectives. The charge of the group is to gather and share information on customized levels of processing with particular emphasis on public services. The members of the group are volunteers and represent a broad range of constituencies.

Responsibilities of the group include:
- Compiling a bibliography or literature review relevant to the levels of processing proposed by Greene and Meissner.
- Soliciting repositories for processing manuals. (The group is currently soliciting examples of processing manuals and any processing-relevant policies.)
- Surveying archivists regarding repositories' processing and public services practices and summarizing and synthesizing survey results, processing manuals, literature, and other appropriate resources and information.
- Proposing assessment measures and models to judge the impact of customized levels of processing on users and public service archivists.
- Offering models, workflows, or other means for public service archivists and other repository staff to benefit collections and users.
- Fostering communication within the working group and the larger archival community while work is underway via appropriate means that allow and encourage communication, collaboration, and feedback.
- Maintaining an appropriate tool to document the working group's results and encouraging collaboration from outside of the working group.
- Actively participating in reviews of the group's progress and purpose and making recommendations for appropriate further actions.

The working group will strive to provide timely updates to appropriate SAA constituent groups, other organizations, and the larger community of archivists as appropriate. At least two updates must be provided annually to the steering committees of endorsing sections including one in advance of and/or at the annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists. These reports will then be made available in whole or abridged form as appropriate at a minimum via the section blog, newsletter, and/or listserv as well as via any additional communication mediums (wiki, blog, etc.) established by the working group.

The goal of the working group is to serve an advisory role. All of the products we generate are intended to benefit the larger archival community and users of repositories. If you have any thoughts or suggestions, please contact co-chairs Shannon Bowen Maier (sebowen@uwyo.edu) or Daniel Santamaria (dsantam@princeton.edu), or RAO section representative Casey Babcock (cbabcock@lagcc.cuny.edu).

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FEATURE ARTICLE

"Our Archives" Wiki Pilot Project
Meredith Doviak, Social Media Team, Policy and Planning Staff, NARA

The National Archives launched a public wiki pilot project on July 8, 2010 to create a collaborative space for both researchers and staff to share knowledge about NARA records, resources and research. This wiki pilot project, called "Our Archives," is an opportunity for researchers, historians, archivists, citizen archivists and staff to work together to create pages on specific records or themes, as well as share information and resources to connect with other researchers.

The use of wikis has become increasingly popular as a social media tool that allows for greater knowledge sharing and collaboration in a shared work environment. Because wikis allow multiple users to view and edit content, subject matter experts can add to existing content or create new content of their own, making their knowledge available to a broader range of users.

In April 2010, David Ferriero, the Archivist of the United States, announced this wiki pilot project as a way to harness the collective knowledge and subject matter expertise of researchers and staff, and make it universally available in a dynamic and collaborative work space. Following the archivist's announcement, the National Archives organized two planning meetings for those interested in contributing to the project. These meetings were attended by researchers, staff, and citizen archivists and were used as brainstorming sessions to discuss ideas for content, topical pages and the types of information users would like to include in the wiki.

As a result of these meetings, three draft template pages were created to be used as stub and seed pages in the wiki: one for Record Groups, one for NARA offices and facilities, and one for how to get started on research at the National Archives. Record Group pages can provide a description of the Record Group from the researcher's point of view, offer advice for how a researcher could benefit from searching within the Record Group, as well as discuss uses outside the initial intended purpose. NARA office pages can provide not only contact and location information of the facility, but also tips for what to expect on your first visit, descriptions of the holdings at the location, as well suggestions for improvement at the facility. Getting started on research pages identify which NARA location contains relevant information on the topic, provide links to keyword searches within the online catalog, post questions and answers about a research topic, as well as provide links to external sources of related information. These seed pages were posted to a planning wiki that was created to help develop the pilot project, where users could provide feedback and continue to contribute additional ideas and suggestions. Each of these seed pages is intended to provide a framework for the types of information users can include within the wiki, but this is merely a starting point; the wiki is intended to be a space that grows and evolves based on user needs.

Users are encouraged to participate in a number of ways, by creating new pages or editing existing pages about historical subjects and records, or by sharing resources and advice for conducting research at various NARA facilities. Users can also publish transcriptions and personal annotations of documents, or even videos and research tutorials. It is our hope to use this space to expand upon existing catalog descriptions, create a useful resource for researchers to store information and connect with other users with similar research interests. As a pilot project, the National Archives hopes to see this wiki evolve and grow with unique and creative contributions from various users.

If you have ideas and would like to contribute to the wiki, we can set up a user account for you. Please contact Rebecca Warlow via email: OurArchivesWiki [at] nara [dot] gov

Access more information and view Our Archives Wiki at: http://www.ourarchives.wikispaces.net/

Information about the Archives Wiki can also be found on our blog, NARAtions, at http://blogs.archives.gov/online-public-access/?tag=wiki

Connect with Research at the National Archives on Facebook: http://www.facebook.com/researchatusnationalarchives

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DERANGEMENT AND DESCRIPTION (a crazy little archives webcomic)

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