Course Overview

This course is designed to provide students with an understanding of advanced archival descriptive theory and practice. It focuses on the use of standards adopted by the international archival community for the purpose of creating and exchanging data concerning historical records. Particular emphases will be devoted to issues surrounding the historical development and use of the MARC format for Archival and Mixed Collections (AMC) and move along to the development and implementation of the Encoded Archival Description (EAD), including an examination of the administrative and technical issues involved in the use of EAD as a descriptive standard. We will also center our attention on the Encoded Archival Context—Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families (EAC-CPF), a new standard for creating and sharing information on records creators. Many repositories have implemented collection management systems to establish controls for their collections. We will focus on one particular system—the Archivist Toolkit and demonstrate its utility for the descriptive life-cycle of records and collections. We will also explore the world of digital library development, including the creation of object metadata, and how that impacts our archival descriptive practice. Specific emphasis will be placed on the issues and concerns surrounding the development of digital projects and collections in our repositories. Finally, we will examine the potential impact of Institutional Repositories (IR) in our efforts to preserve and provide access to "born-digital" records created by institutions and individuals, and also the potential of Web 2.0 technologies and social networking in archival description.

Course Requirements

Students enrolled in this course are required to read selections in the archival literature devoted to both theoretical and practical concerns of archival description. There will be a series of short assignments to engage you in this literature. In addition, each student will also create archival cataloging (AMC) records and EAD finding aids for selected historical collections.
Basis of Evaluation of Student Performance

(1) Response papers. Two short essays (ca. 5 pages each) on the assigned readings on archival processing and description. The major focus of the two essays is to incorporate your particular reaction to the issues, problems, and solutions offered in the literature. Due on September 29.

(2) AMC records. Each student will produce archival/bibliographic records using the MARC AMC format. These records will be constructed from archival finding aids and will incorporate authorized names and subject headings to facilitate efficient searching. These records will be created in class on October 6 and completed and handed in by October 20.

(3) EAD finding aids. Each student will be provided with a completed finding aid that you will mark up in EAD using an XML authoring software program. The completed and validated finding aid will be transformed to html for delivery on the web by using an XSL stylesheet and transformation program. We will also create finding aids using the Archivist Toolkit, based on the description life cycle of a collection (accessioning, processing and preliminary finding aid to completed EAD finding aid). Finding aids will be marked up during class on October 27 and November 3, with final versions completed by November 17. Archivists Toolkit finding aids are to be completed by December 8.

(4) Final reaction paper. Each student will write and submit a final paper summarizing the main issues that we discussed throughout the semester and the impact on the archival profession. Papers due December 15.

Required Reading

- Articles assigned each week, available as either links to the source or pdf files on this syllabus.

*Arranging and Describing Archives & Manuscripts* and *Describing Archives* can be ordered from the Society of American Archivists at a discounted rate for members (you are urged to join as a student member). [http://www.archivists.org/](http://www.archivists.org/) Journal articles assigned throughout the course will be available as pdf files on our Blackboard course site. They are also available in the journal collections within Bobst Library (check for e-journals). Other sources will be distributed in class.

Suggested Websites

The following websites will be useful references throughout the course:

Archival Cataloging (AMC):

Class Schedule and Reading Assignments

September 8  Introduction to Advanced Archival Description and Descriptive Standards

This session will serve as an introduction to the course and provide some historical context to the world of archival description. The move toward descriptive standards and adoption of those standards will be explored within the context of traditional descriptive practices.

September 15  Archival Processing: Implications for Arrangement and Description

With the publication of Greene and Meissner's "More Product, Less Product" (2005), archivists have re-examined their approach and level of processing historical collections. In this session we will examine the pros and cons of MPLP, and its impact on archival descriptive practice. We will also discuss recent literature that explores issues of authenticity, accountability, and evidence in archival description.
Readings:

**MPLP**


**Authenticity, Accountability, and Evidence in Archival Description**


**Assignment: Response Paper**

Based on your reading for the past two weeks, each student will prepare two separate essays (ca. 5 pages) on the issues identified regarding 1) the effects of MPLP on processing and description; and 2) authenticity, accountability, and evidence in archival description. These essays should highlight the main themes discussed in the literature, comparing and contrasting viewpoints expressed by the authors. The focus of the paper should be your reaction to these issues. How important are they? What questions do they raise for archivists and users of archives? **Papers due September 29.**

**September 22**  
Archival Description: A Review of Essential Components

This session will continue our discussion and review of archival description, including a critical examination of traditional descriptive tools created by archivists and manuscript curators, specifically the finding aid, and the move toward the development of AMC and EAD.

**Readings:**


The AMC Format: Communications Vehicle and Cataloging Conventions

This session will serve as an introduction to archival cataloging, centering on the development and use of the MARC Archives and Mixed Materials (AMC) format. We will explore the structure of AMC in detail, with emphasis on fixed and variable length fields, data content and data values, and discuss cataloging conventions used to create AMC records. Archivists and curators must "play by the rules" in order to create both bibliographic records and online finding aids for their historical collections. We will examine several cataloging conventions used to "standardize descriptive practice" while allowing flexibility for cataloging unique materials. These include the Anglo-American Cataloging Rules, 2nd ed. (AACR2); Archives, Personal Papers, and Manuscript Collection: A Cataloging Manual for Archival Repositories, Historical Societies, and Manuscript Libraries (APPM); the Library of Congress Name and LC Subject Authorities (NAF, SAF); Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH); the Art and Architecture Thesaurus (AAT), and Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACS). We will be consulting the MARC Standards website maintained by the Library of Congress http://lcweb.loc.gov/marc/ to explore the specific elements (fields, subfields, and indicators) for AMC cataloging.

Readings:


October 6  Creating AMC records

This session will serve to review the components of a bibliographic record by examining examples of archival finding aids handed out in class. We will attempt to solve conflicts in choices of headings, and suggest appropriate data elements to include in these records. Sample records and an AMC template will be distributed in class to facilitate our creating AMC records. Completed AMC records will be due on October 20.

Readings:

Describing Archives: A Content Standard, pp. 85-197. We will incorporate these sections and chapters of DACS in our class discussion and record creation. We will also search the Library of Congress Name and Subject Authority Files (NAF and SAF) and ArchivesGrid (OCLC) to assist our selection of appropriate terms.

October 13  Encoded Archival Description (EAD): Theory, Context, and Structure

This session will begin our exploration of the Encoded Archival Description (EAD), with particular emphasis on the theory and context for its development, the benefits of creating a specific Document Type Definition (DTD) in SGML/XML, and the actual structure of EAD.

Readings:


October 20  

EAD as a Reference Tool

While generally receiving strong support from the archival community, EAD has its critics. During this session we will explore the strengths and weaknesses of EAD as a viable reference tool, with particular focus on design, terminology, navigation, and searching capabilities. We will also continue marking up finding aids and address individuals' questions and concerns.

Readings:


October 27  Marking Up Finding Aids in EAD

During this session we will create EAD finding aids. We will examine several "Best Practice Guidelines" that have guided various EAD implementations.

Readings:


Please bring a copy of the *Cookbook* to class.


Best Practice Guidelines:


OAC Best Practice Guidelines for EAD [http://www.cdlib.org/services/dsc/contribute/docs/oacbpgead_v2-0.pdf](http://www.cdlib.org/services/dsc/contribute/docs/oacbpgead_v2-0.pdf)

EAD Overview for Encoding Finding Aids at Rutgers

November 3  EAD Markup II

We will continue marking up our finding aids in EAD during class and address all specific issues, questions, and concerns. We will also devote our attention to the development of stylesheets for delivering EAD finding aids over the World Wide Web. We will discuss XSLT encoding protocols, develop a prototype stylesheet for EAD, and examine those available in the *EAD Cookbook*. The stylesheets will enable us to transform the EAD-XML file into an html document for accessibility on the Web.

Completed EAD finding aids will be due November 17.

Readings:

November 10

Encoded Archival Context—Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families

This session will provide an opportunity to explore some new developments in the area of archival description, specifically the development of the Encoded Archival Context—Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families (EAC-CPF) to record and share information on records creators and Encoded Archival Guide (EAG) for sharing information on archival holdings.

Readings:


Richard V. Szary, "Encoded Archival Context (EAC) and Archival Description: Rationale and Background," *Encoding Across Frontiers*, 217-227.


Michelle Light, "Moving Beyond the Name: Defining Corporate Entities to Support Provenance-Based Access," in *Respect for Authority*: 49-74.

Suggested Websites:

November 17  Managing the Descriptive Life Cycle using the Archivist Toolkit

This session will explore the use of collection management software to record data and manage collections from the point of accessioning through the production of finding aids and cataloging records. We will focus on the Archivists Toolkit as it is utilized in the Rutgers University Archives to demonstrate its utility in managing collection data. A sample scenario will be presented to follow the process of data entry from acquisition and accessioning to finding aid creation.

Readings:

Archivist Toolkit Website:  http://www.archiviststoolkit.org


December 1  Archivists Toolkit (continued)

In this session each student will be provided with an accession record and preliminary finding aid for a record series or collection in the University Archives and will enter that data into the Archivists Toolkit.

Completed finding aids in the Archivists Toolkit are due by December 8.

December 8  Digital Library Standards, Digital Collections, and Digital Projects

While archivists have adopted AMC and EAD as structure standards, and now DACS as a content standard, the digital library world has developed other metadata standards that foster accessibility and interoperability of electronic resources. How do these fit into the world of archival description? In this session we will examine the various digital library standards that exist, including Dublin
Core (DC), the Metadata Encoding and Transmission Standard (METS), the Metadata Object Description Schema (MODS), the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI), and the Open Archives Initiative Protocol for Metadata Harvesting (OAI-PMH). In addition to providing online access to metadata on our historical collections, many repositories are also providing access to collections of digital objects or are constructing digital projects around certain subjects or historical themes. This session will explore this work and the issues that surround these developments.

Readings:


Suggested websites (please review each one):

Dublin Core: [http://dublincore.org/](http://dublincore.org/)
METS: [http://www.loc.gov/standards/mets/](http://www.loc.gov/standards/mets/)
MODS: [http://www.loc.gov/standards/mods/](http://www.loc.gov/standards/mods/)
RUCore (Rutgers Community Repository): [http://rucore.libraries.rutgers.edu/](http://rucore.libraries.rutgers.edu/)

December 15 **Institutional Repositories, Web 2.0, and Archival Description**

Our final session will explore the issues, problems and concerns raised during the course of the semester. We will briefly examine the impact of Institutional Repositories on archival descriptive, particularly from an academic and research library perspective and examine the potential of Web 2.0 technologies and social networking on archival descriptive practice.
Readings:


**Final course reaction paper due on December 15.**

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13