Controlled Vocabulary, Standardized Terminology, or Keyword Searching: Access to Archival and Manuscript Collections via EAD Finding Aids on the Web

Susan Hamburger, Ph.D.
22 June 1999
RBMS Preconference

Repositories with Finding Aids Examined

- ArchivesSpace
- ArkivDigital
- Baskerville University
- Berklee College of Music
- Boston College
- Brown University
- California State University, Long Beach
- University of California, Berkeley
- University of California, Los Angeles
- Chicago History Museum
- University of Chicago
- City University of New York
- Cleveland State University
- Columbia University
- Indiana University
- Kansas State University
- Library of Congress
- Louisiana State University
- Maryland Institute for Art Conservation
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- University of Michigan
- Institute for Social Research
- University of Minnesota
- Naval History and Heritage Command
- University of Nebraska
- University of New Mexico
- New York University
- Ohio State University
- Library of Pennsylvania
- Pennsylvania State University
- University of Pennsylvania
- Purdue University
- University of Virginia
- University of Wisconsin
- Virginia Commonwealth University
- Waseda University

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Methodology--Sample

- EAD List
  - 25 Implementers
- Repositories of Primary Resources
  - 15 possible implementers
- 40 repositories
  - 35 U.S.
  - 2 Canada
  - 3 England

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Finding Aid Delivery Methods

- SGML (EAD)
  - Panorama Viewer (6)
  - MultiDoc Pro (1)
- HTML
  - On-the-fly conversion from SGML via DynaWeb (7)
  - Straight HTML coding (21)

How Finding Aids Are Displayed

- Alphabetical list (33)
- Topical list (17)
- Both of the above (12)
- Catalog record 856 link (1)
- Unordered list (1)

Locating Finding Aids

- Search engine (21)
- Topical organization (17)
- Alphabetical list (33)
- Both topical and alphabetical (12)
- OPAC (22)
  - 555 note
  - 856 link to finding aid
<Controlaccess> Terms: Subjects

- Repositories using topical subject headings in finding aids
  - None (26)
  - Source: LCSH (3)
  - Appeared to conform to LCSH (14)
  - Non-standard terminology (2)

<Controlaccess> Terms: Names

- Repositories using personal or corporate names in finding aids
  - None (3)
  - Source: LCNAF (3)
  - Appeared to conform to LCNAF (1)
  - Non-conforming (8)

Remote Users

- Hierarchical
  - Institution → Library → OPAC → catalog record → finding aid
- Search engine (Yahoo, MetaCrawler)
  - Name/topic → finding aid
  - Name/topic → box/folder listing
- RLG's Archival Resources
  - Database → finding aid
Standards

- RLIN/OCLC
  - At least one LCSH subject term
  - Library of Congress Name Authority File
  - APPM rules for description and cataloging archives and manuscripts
  - RAD for fonds

Consistency

- Catalog record
  - LCNAF and LCSH
- Finding aid
  - Local use of names
    - Complete full name contradicts LCNAF
      - Example: Jeb Stuart (LCNAF), J.E.B. Stuart, James Ewell Brown Stuart
    - Nicknames, no last names
    - For women: first, middle, (maiden), married

Consistency: Subjects

- Finding aids
  - Local subject headings
    - Contradicts LCSH
    - Lack of subject
      - Example: collection of regimental records never mentions the Civil War
  - Keyword Access
    - Nonstandard terminology
    - Inconsistent retrieval
University of Notre Dame Archives: William Tecumseh Sherman Family Papers (CSHR)

Correspondence, 1832-1891
- 1/20 F 1832-1836
- 1/21 F 1839
- 1/22 F 1840
- 1/23 F 1841-1842 (includes related papers)

Placement of Names and Subjects

- <Controlaccess>
  - List following <Scopecontent>
- <Scopecontent>
  - Use LCNAF version of name, with source attribute
  - Use LCSH subject terms to describe contents
- Series <<01>
  - In context, within each series description

University of Michigan, Bentley Library

Series: Correspondence (1981 accession)

Scope and Content Note: Correspondence and other Papers (1981 accession) consists of two subseries: Chronological and Alphabetical. Items Chronological subseries dates from 1817 to 1896. The Alphabetical subseries includes letters received from such notable figures as James W. Bradbury, Samuel J. Bridge, Lewis Can, C. C. Jackson, Robert C. McClelland, Owen March, Karl F. Pichette, Anthony Ten Eyck, and William Woodbridge. Personal correspondence with Mrs. Lucinda Felch and Edwin A. Lawrence (brother-in-law) provide information on a wide variety of political and social subjects.

Subseries: Chronological
- Box 1 (cont.)
  - 1817 (John Felch)
  - 1824-1827.

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Alpheus Felch Papers

Hits: In Context: Felch, Alpheus, 1844-1896. Alpheus Felch Papers

Search: "Civil war" Anywhere in a finding aid

Administrative Information
Biography
Organization of Collection
Collection Scope and Content Note

Controlled Access Terms
United States—History—Civil War, 1861-1865
United States—History—Civil War, 1861-1865

Contents List
Series: Photographs
- Box 6 (cont.)
  - Civil War portraits
  - Civil War portraits

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Conclusions

- What we're doing now:
  - Subject headings and name authority
    - Reliance on OPAC
      - Inconsistent use/nonstandard terms
      - Omission
      - Not coding source of terms
    - Ignoring serendipitous remote user access paths

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Recommendations

- What we need to do:
  - Standardize names and subjects
    - LCSH
    - LCNAF
  - Adopt cataloging principles
  - Put terms in context
    - <Controlaccess>
    - Scope and content note
    - Series description

20 June 1999  Susan Hamburger, Ph.D.—Controlled Vocabulary and EAD Finding Aids
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