Finding Aid Basics: An Introduction to DACS

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Finding Aid Basics

An Introduction to DACS

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Libraries

❖ Books

❖ Periodicals

❖ Audio/Visual Recordings

Library materials are organized systematically and kept for borrowing or study. Library materials are generally <u>not</u> unique.

Archives

Historically and culturally significant content

- **Diaries**
- **Newspaper clippings**
- **Organizational papers**
- **Correspondence**
- **Oral histories**
- **Photographs**
- **Videos**
- **Artwork**
- **Drawings**
- **Interviews**
- **Manuscript drafts**
- **Scrapbooks**

Archives are collections that preserve contextual relationships between records

Archives

3 definitions

- Materials: Noncurrent records of an institution/organization/individual preserved because of their enduring value.

- Place: The repository. The building where archived materials are located

- Agency: The archival agency/institution/program responsible for handling the archives

Processing

The arrangement, housing, and description of archival collections for their storage and use by patrons.

Arrangement

Housing

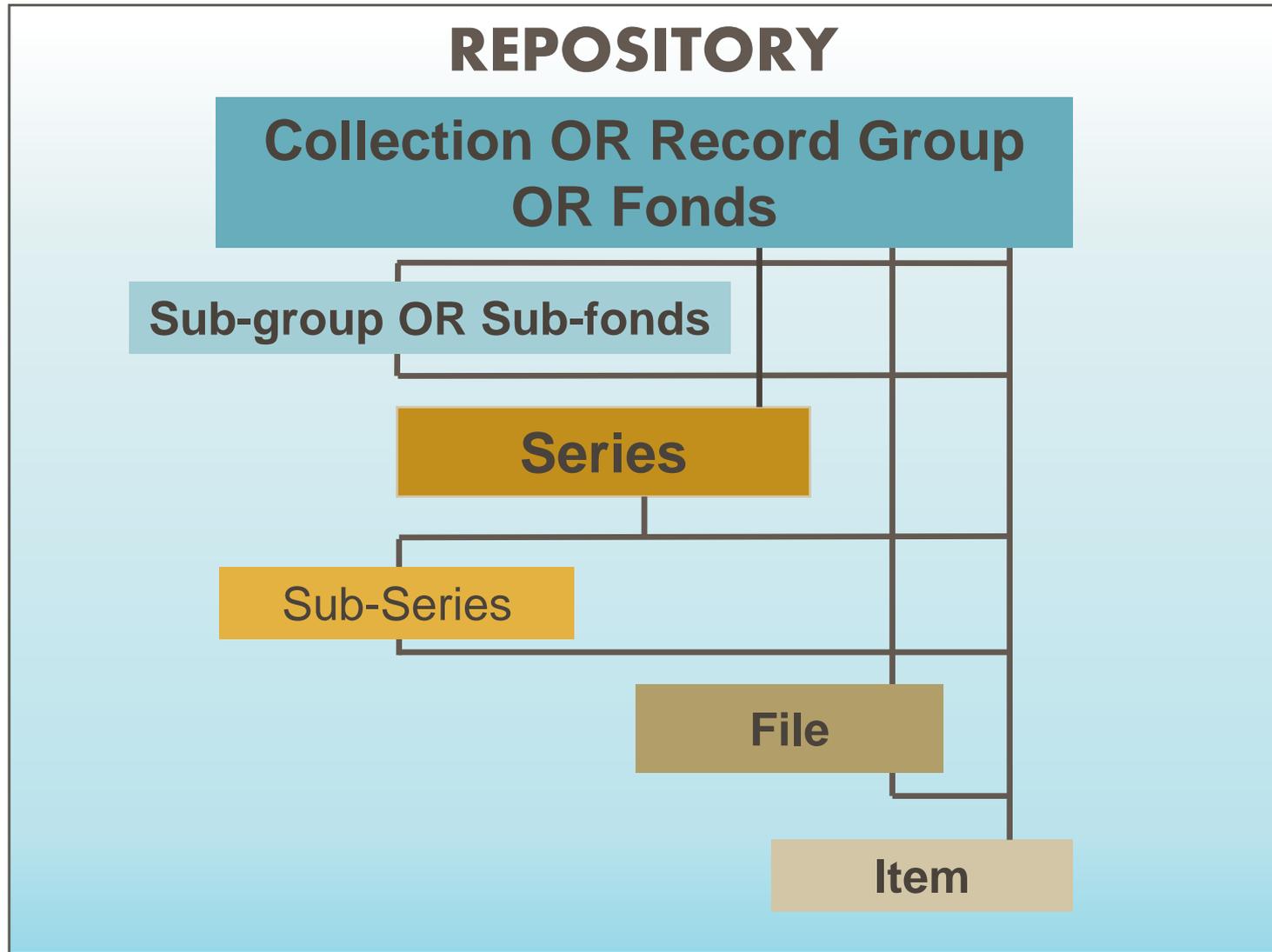Description

Key Terms & Concepts

Repository

any type of organization that holds documents, including business, institutional, and government archives, manuscript collections, libraries, museums, and historical societies

Provenance

dictates that the records of one person or organization are not to be mixed with records of another person or organization

Original Order

the organization and sequence of records established by the creator of the records; strive to maintain in all collections

Collection

group of material with some unifying characteristic – a person, family group, corporate body, or subject either from a common source of as a natural product of activity or function

Levels of Arrangement

REPOSITORY

Collection OR Record Group OR Fonds

Sub-group OR Sub-fonds

Series

Sub-Series

File

Item

Repository

Any type of organization that holds documents, including business, institutional, and government archives, manuscript collections, libraries, museums, and historical societies.

Collection

A group of material with some unifying characteristic – a person, family group, corporate body, or subject either from a common source of as a natural product of activity or function.

Series

A group of similar records that are arranged according to a filing system and that are related as the result of being created, received, or used in the same activity. Can be divided into sub-series.

Common function-based series:
- Legal papers
- Business papers
- Personal papers
- Genealogical papers

Common format-based series:
- Diaries/Journals
- Ephemera
- Photographs
- Audiotapes
- Videotapes
- Clippings

File

A group of documents related by use or topic, typically housed in a folder (or a group of folders for a large file).

Item

Smallest archival unit. An individual document or manuscript that can be distinguished from a group in that it is complete in itself.

Finding Aids

A generic term…..

- "Finding aid includes a wide range of formats, including card indices, calendars, guides, inventories, shelf and container lists, and registers…

- Finding aid is a single document that places the materials in context by consolidating information about acquisition and processing; provenance, including administrative history or biographical note; scope of the collection, including size, subjects, media; organization and arrangement; and an inventory of the series and the folders." [SAA Glossary]

Sample Finding Aids

- Presbyterian Historical Society
  - http://www.history.pcusa.org/collections/findingaids/

- Richard B. Russell Library/University of Georgia
  - http://russelldoc.galib.uga.edu/russell/search?browse-title=first;sort=title

- Florida State University/Special Collections
  - http://fsuarchon.fcla.edu/?p=collections/collections&setrepositoryid=2

- Pennsylvania Area Consortium of Special Collection Libraries Finding Aids Database
  - http://dla.library.upenn.edu/dla/pacscl/index.html
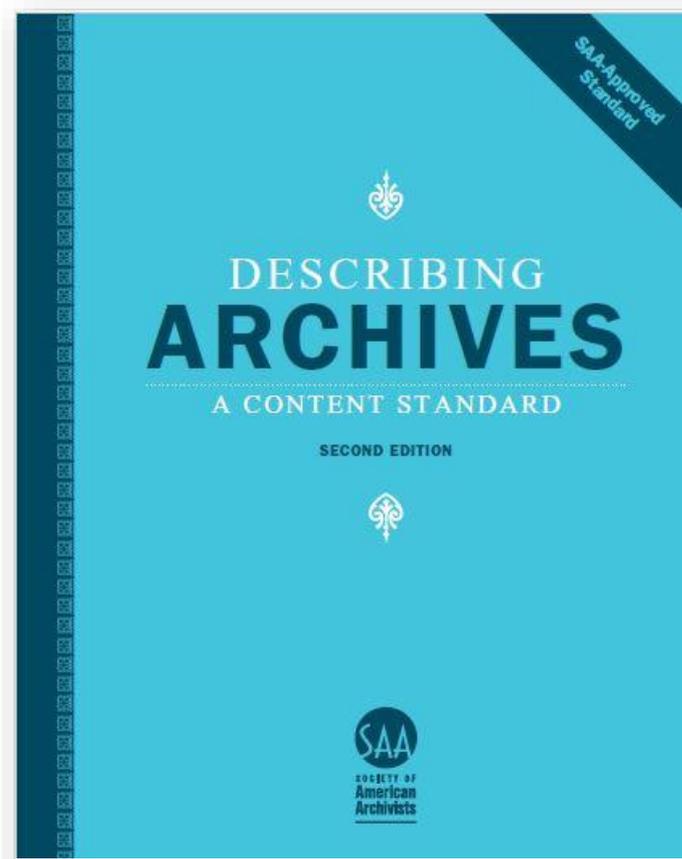
Finding Aids

Creating the Finding Aid

- Generally should be at the collection <u>not</u> item level

- Clarify the relationship of the records to the function that created them

- Arrangement of the finding aid should parallel that of the collection

- Be brief and not exhaustive

- Should be concise and accurate

- Detail only exceptional items.

What is DACS?
Describing Archives a Content Standard

- An output-neutral set of rules for describing archives, personal papers, and manuscript collections, and can be applied to all material types. It is the U.S. implementation of international standards (i.e., ISAD[G] and ISAAR[CPF]) for the description of archival materials and their creators. (SAA)

- Defines 25 elements "useful in creating systems for describing archival materials"

- Supports single-level or multi-level descriptions

- Allows both full (or traditional) and minimum description

DACS

- Part I: rules to "ensure the creation of consistent, appropriate, and self-explanatory descriptions of archival material."

- Part II : rules to describe the context of through archival authority records.

- Part III: Appendices.

Required Components of a Finding Aid

- Unique Number (Reference Code/Call Number)

- Name and Location of Repository

- Languages

- Collection Title

- Date

- Extent

- Name of Creator(s) (If known)

- Biographical/Historical Note

- Scope and Content Note

- Conditions Governing Access/Reproduction and Use

Identity Elements
2.1   Reference Code (Required)
2.2   Name and Location of Repository (Required)
2.3   Title (Required)
2.4   Date (Required)
2.5   Extent (Required)
2.6   Name of Creator(s) (Required, If Known)
2.7   Administrative/Biographical History (Optimum)

Collection Title

Titles generally have two parts:
- the name of the creator(s) or collector(s)
- the nature of the materials being described

Woman's Club of Germantown records
Sarah Logan Wister Starr papers
Global Dye Works records
Tomlinson, Foehr, and Peters family papers
Lincoln Cartledge photograph collection

DACS Rules

- Purpose and Scope
- Sources of Information
- Sources of Information
- General Rules
- Nature of the Archival Unit
  - Papers
  - Records
  - Collection
- Topic of Archival Unit

Dates

Inclusive Dates: the earliest and latest dates of the materials

Bulk Dates: dates pertaining to a majority of the collection differ significantly from the inclusive dates

1785 – 1960, bulk 1916-1958

DACS Rules

- Purpose and Scope
- Exclusions
- Sources of Information
- General Rules
- Date Ranges
- Single Dates
- No Dates

Extent

Indicates the extent and the physical nature of the materials being described. Typically measured in linear or cubic feet, and can also include number of boxes/items.

5 linear feet; 6 boxes
15 linear feet; 10 containers, 26 volumes

DACS Rules

- Purpose and Scope
- Exclusions
- Sources of Information
- General Rules

> 2.5.6 Optionally, qualify the statement of physical extent to highlight the existence of material types that are important.
>
>   45 linear feet, including 200 photographs and 16 maps
>
>   3 boxes, including photographs and audiocassettes

- Multiple Statements of Extent
- Statements of Extent for Electronic Records

Creator

Identifies the corporate bodies, persons, and families association with the creation, assembly, or accumulation of the materials.

Hamilton, Alexander, 1757-1804
Schramm family
Women's Club of Germantown (Philadelphia, Pa.)
Globe Dye Works (Philadelphia, Pa.)

DACS Rules

- Purpose and Scope
- Exclusions
- Sources of Information
- General Rules
  - Library of Congress

Biographical/ Historical Note

Biographical Note: For when the creator is an individual or family. Includes birth and death dates, occupations, marriages, children, events, and accomplishments. For families, includes relationships between individuals in the collections

Historical Note: For when the creator is an institution, business, corporation, or organization. Includes founding and dissolution dates, geographic location, purpose or function, and any name changes.

DACS Rules

- Purpose and Scope
- Exclusions
- Source of Information
- Rules for Biographical Historical Notes Done Within the Description
- Selection of the Sub elements
- Names, how to record
- Identity Elements
  - Dates   Place of Residence
  - Education   Occupation, Activities
  - Important Relationships

Scope and Content Note

Provides an overview of the collection's content and should include types of materials present; significant people, places, topics, or events documented; strengths and weaknesses of the collection; what you might expect that isn't there; what you might expect that is there.

DACS Rules

- Purpose and Scope
- Exclusions
- Sources of Information
- General Rules
    - Record information about gaps in collection
    - Describe types of information in the files/records
    - Indicate reproductions

Conditions Governing Access/Reproductions and Use

Conditions Governing Access: List any restrictions regarding access to the materials.

Conditions Governing Reproductions and Use: List any restrictions, after access, on the use of the materials and any restrictions regarding reproduction and/or publication.

DACS Rules

- Purpose and Scope
- Exclusions
- Sources of Information
- General Rules
  - Very Specific – "All student records in this series are subject to Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) restrictions of seventy-five years from the date of creation of the record."
  - General – Access is restricted. Consult repository for details

Abstract

Brief summary of the scope and content and biographical information. Meant to enhance resource discovery.

Example

Abstract: The records of the Corinth Chamber of Commerce include correspondence, events files, meeting minutes, newspaper clippings concerning community projects, and a scrapbook of photographs.

Additional Components of a Finding Aid (Added Value)

- **Arrangement Note/Processing Information Note**

- **Series Description**

- Immediate Source of Acquisition/Custodial History

- Separated Materials Note

- Inventory/Box List

- Related Materials

Controlled Access Headings

Selected using a controlled vocabulary to ensure that only one term represents a concept.

Library of Congress Subject Headings: http://id.loc.gov/authorities/subjects.html	Getty Vocabulary Tools: http://www.getty.edu/research/tools/vocabularies/

- Corporate Names
- Geographic Names
- Personal Names
- Subjects

- Genre
- Function
- Style
- Material

Encoded Archival Description

A standard used to mark up (encode) finding aids that reflects the hierarchical structure of archival collections and that provides a structure for describing the whole of a collection, as well as its components. A nonproprietary document type definition (DTD), EAD is compatible with both Standard Generalized Markup Language (SGML) and extensible markup language (XML).

```xml
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8" standalone="true"?>
- <ead xmlns:xsi="http://www.w3.org/2001/XMLSchema-instance" xmlns="urn:is
  xsi:schemaLocation="urn:isbn:1-931666-22-9 http://www.loc.gov/ead/ead.xsd":
    - <eadheader langencoding="iso639-2b" dateencoding="iso8601" countryencoding=
      findaidstatus="Completed">
        <eadid/>
      - <filedesc>
        - <titlestmt>
          - <titleproper>
              Central High School Scrapbooks Collection Finding Aid
              <num>2012.01</num>
            </titleproper>
            <subtitle>Finding Aid Prepared by Anastasia Matijkiw</subtitle>
            <author>Finding aid prepared by Anastasia Matijkiw</author>
          </titlestmt>
        - <publicationstmt>
            <publisher>Central High School Archives</publisher>
          - <address>
              <addressline>1700 W Ogontz Ave</addressline>
              <addressline>Philadelphia, PA, 19141</addressline>
            </address>
            <date>April 5, 2012</date>
          </publicationstmt>
        </filedesc>
      - <profiledesc>
        - <creation>
            This finding aid was produced using the Archivists' Toolkit
            <date>2016-11-10T20:55-0500</date>
          </creation>
          <descrules>Describing Archives: A Content Standard</descrules>
        </profiledesc>
      </eadheader>
    - <archdesc level="collection">
      - <did>
```

Archival Associations and Continuing Education

- **Society of American Archivists (SAA)**
  - http://www.archivists.org/

- **Academy of Certified Archivists (ACA)**
  - http://www.certifiedarchivists.org/

- **New York Archives Conference**
  - http://www.nyarchivists.org/

- **Capital Area Archivists of New York**
  - http://www.capitalarchivist.org/caa/

- **Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Consortium**
  - https://marac.memberclicks.net/

- **Archivists Roundtable of Metropolitan New York**
  - http://www.nycarchivists.org/

Bibliography

- Carmichael, David W. *Organizing Archival Records: A Practical Method of Arrangement and Description for Small Archives.* Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004.

- Hunter, Gregory S. *Developing and Maintaining Practical Archives: A How-To-Do-It Manual*. New York: Neal-Schumann Publishers, 2003.

- Society of American Archivists. *Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACS)*. Chicago: SAA, 2007.

- Society of American Archivists' Archival Fundamentals series II:
  - *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology*, Richard Pierce-Moses
  - *Arranging and Describing Archives and Manuscripts*, Kathleen D. Roe
  - *Managing Archival and Manuscript Repositories,* Michael Kurtz

Questions?