Annotated Bibliography

Encoded Archival Description (EAD)

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The editor of this collection, Jackie M. Dooley was Head of Special Collections at UC Irvine, and was heavily involved in the development of EAD through the Society of American Archivists (SAA). The chapters have been written by experts in the field of EAD. Each author has played a significant role in the development and implementation of the standard. This book provides an introductory context for understanding the theory behind the development of EAD. The work goes on to examine how EAD has been implemented in six different settings. The editor compiles articles that highlight the growth of EAD and the driving forces behind its development. The introductory chapter by EAD “founding father” Daniel V. Pitti acts as a fantastic overview of the impetus behind the encoding standard. The remainder of the context and theory section provides a well-rounded and fairly concise explanation of the structure and function of EAD. A familiarity with EAD is necessary for an appreciation of the detailed case studies. A more appropriate starting point would be the SAA’s online EAD introduction ([http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/ead/aboutEAD.html](http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/ead/aboutEAD.html)). For budding archivists who have already had initial contact with EAD, this can function as a valuable tool for understanding the nature of EAD.


This book outlines the archival content standards formulated by the Canadian-U.S. Task Force on Archival Description (CUSTARD) as a new standard that can be applied within the context of MARC 21 or EAD. This standard was developed in an effort to revamp antiquated and ill-equipped standards and to create internationally compatible guidelines for archival description. The book is divided into three parts: Describing Archival Materials, Describing Creators, and Forms of Names. The book functions like a style manual. The purpose of the element and the general rules for creating the content are provided, followed by handy examples of how the element appears within MARC and EAD coding. The appendices include a useful glossary and an incredibly helpful listing of “crosswalks” which detail the relationships between the elements of various standards. This enables users to identify similar content across multiple standards and allow ease of data transfer between systems. This is a useful resource that can assist practicing archivists in their attempts to modernize their archival records. When utilized in combination with a structural reference such as *Encoded Archival Description Tag Library, version 2002*, this resource can provide a thorough guide to EAD composition.

The first version of EAD was supplanted by a new iteration in 2002. The EAD veterans responsible for the restructuring of the encoding standard prepared this book as a tool to guide those EAD users who were planning to jump over to the new version, as well as new users. The book outlines the elements of the revamped EAD structure in alphabetical order, for ease of use. Each encyclopedic entry provides a description of the element, what can be contained within it and what it can occur within (as part of the EAD’s hierarchical structure), as well as an example of how the element is used within the context of an actual EAD entry. This work provides a good outline of the structure and function of the variety of EAD elements. That being said, the book is of real use only to those who are currently working with EAD. The work only provides structural reference, and does not address the theoretical underpinnings or practical usages of EAD. This work can and should be supplemented with Describing Archives: A Content Standard (SAA, 2007) as it provides guidelines for the content found within the element structure described by this work.

Articles


Imhof, an archivist at the National Archives of Germany (Bundesarchiv) offers a list of issues that affect the interoperability of EAD content with non-archival frameworks. Imhof’s list is guided by the question “can the information illustrated in EAD be transferred expeditiously to other information portals?” Although no answers are provided, the various aspects of interoperability demand serious consideration by the international or inter-organizational archivist. Imhof briefly addresses the differences between library and archival organization, international legal questions, and the hierarchical nature of finding aids versus the single levels of other metadata structures. The article concludes with an appeal to archivists to reform the searchability standards of archival inventories, with the goal of enabling a joint search interface with libraries. This article illustrates that even when standardization is appropriately implemented, there can still be access issues, especially when considering international and inter-organizational sharing of EAD records. Although no real solutions are provided by Imhof, the topics addressed in this article can prompt further discussion among archivists.

McCrory (Archivist, Cartoon Research Library) and Russell (Head, Special Collections Cataloging), both of Ohio State University (OSU), describe an effort to implement EAD at their institution and highlight the collaborative efforts needed to effectively initiate and complete the task. According to the authors, at the time of publication, there were very few published models of collaborative endeavors to apply EAD across a system. It is their intention to provide such a model. The authors worked together on creating procedures for applying new metadata to the EAD structure and moving existing metadata from MARC to EAD. Although it is too much to claim that any type of “model” resulted from the collaboration of the authors, there are definitely valuable guideposts that can be of use to archivists and librarians in the process of implementing EAD. The article provides useful advice, especially in regards to the transfer of MARC data over to EAD and the use of extensible style sheet language (XSLT) in the presentation of finding aids. This article serves as proof of the value of collaboration across institutional departments and offers helpful tools for professionals familiar with the technical process involved in EAD implementation.


Pitti, one of the primary developers of EAD, provides a succinct description of how the archival tradition is continued and improved by the implementation of this standard. Pitti makes clear his ultimate goal for EAD: “universal, union access to primary resources”. The author notes that this goal can be facilitated by EAD, not through the traditional means of bibliographic description, like MARC. He goes on to provide a brief reasoning of why MARC is not a suitable framework for EAD because the services of libraries and archives are fundamentally different. Libraries collect common items, described at the individual level, for the purposes of serving the community at large. Archival repositories, on the other hand, collect unique items, described as related bodies (fonds), for the purposes of serving as evidentiary documentation. Pitti then moves from explaining the theoretical and historical demand for the standard to a description of the hierarchical structure of EAD. By offering an initial outline of how archival description traditionally functioned, Pitti provides context for the following technical schematic of EAD. The article, although dated, provides a brief, yet very understandable explanation of why EAD is necessary and how it fits in with the historical function of traditional archival description.


Roth, a master’s student at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, addresses the various methods of institutional implementation of EAD and the subsequent level of perceived usage by the implementers as well as the users. The author builds off Tatum’s (see below) 1999 article regarding professional EAD perception and the developmental disregard of the end-user. Roth recounts his research into the deployment and utilization of EAD in 31 institutions, finding
several problems confronting the efficient use of EAD. They include: software issues, difficulty transferring old and poorly structured finding aids to EAD, a lack of uniform deployment methods, and little or no institutional evaluation of patron usage. Roth concludes that this lack of understanding in regard to the end-user is a serious impediment to the effectiveness of EAD. The institutions that responded to the Roth’s survey indicated displeasure at the lack of user understanding or ignorance of EAD and archival science. Most of the institutions, however, made no effort to supply relevant information regarding the standards. Roth demands the institutional improvement of user education regarding the use and potential of EAD. The article provides a good starting point for those concerned with EAD user studies and can help relate EAD deployment methods to user satisfaction.


This brief article by Plato Smith, a Digital Initiatives Librarian at Florida State University (FSU), outlines the preparation of EAD finding aids. The bulk of the article addresses the process of EAD metadata enrichment, spurred on by continued global efforts to increase findability in union catalogs and OPACs. FSU achieved this enrichment through the use of the RLG EAD Report card (an updated version of the RLG Best Practice Guidelines – see below) as a guide. They also utilized Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACS, see above) and the Online Archive of California Best Practice Guidelines to build a Formal Public Identifier (FPI). The addition of an FPI and other RLG mandated elements have allowed increased findability and eased the metadata crosswalking process. This article provides a recent report on the state of EAD usage in major universities. Although it is more descriptive than instructive, the article might still provide useful info to archivists, through the inclusion of links to a few aggregated archival collections that have also benefited from EAD enrichment. Readers can also note what resources were used in the process (DACS, RLG EAD Report Card) and follow up with their own investigations.


Tatum, an archivist at Case Western Reserve University, examines the perceived flaws of EAD through the framework of innovation diffusion theory as a means of determining the reasons behind the unwillingness of some archivists to implement the standard. Although dated, the article offers a glimpse at the early use of EAD and provides a retrospective view of a tipping point in EAD implementation. Tatem does a wonderful job of organizing the various complaints about EAD into their respective innovation diffusion categories. Common problems centered on the refusal of many archivists to shift from word-processing to the more complicated SGML as well as concerns for the end-users’ desire to interact with paper finding aids rather than online tools. There is a distinctive Luddite tint to some of the listed complaints. We are able to ascertain the very real obstacles facing the implementation of a valuable tool. The 2002 version of EAD addressed many of these complaints and created a more usable structure for archivists to

This wonderfully readable article by Thurman, a cataloger at Columbia University, explains the structure of EAD in a professional, yet accessible, manner. Thurman details the development of the EAD structure using the technical jargon that professionals are familiar with. Thankfully, through simple writing and the use of helpful figures and appendices, the author efficiently informs the novice of the inner-workings of EAD without appearing to “dumb-it-down” for the rookie. Thurman breaks the hierarchical structure of EAD into its components and provides a brief and useful description of the constituent parts of EAD and their functions. As stated above, the appendices are of great value to the readers that are familiarizing themselves with EAD. The appendices provide full examples of end-user EAD and EAC records alongside their encoded versions. The reader can discern how the metadata is transformed into a usable finding aid. This work is perfect for the archivist who is hoping to transfer their finding aids over to EAD. The article provides a deeper introduction than Pitti’s (see above) article, which could serve as an effective primer for this piece.

Web Resources


The main purpose of this handbook is to provide guidelines that promote increased EAD document access through uniformity of element content. The EAD Advisory Group, a subsidiary of the Research Libraries Group (now merged with OCLC), has outlined what they deem to be essential to the inter-organizational utility and searchability of EAD. A series of tables list the organizational elements and attributes of EAD and state whether their usage is required, mandatory, mandatory if applicable, recommended, or optional. The authors have also included useful comments that assist in the creation of uniform entries. Finally, there are listings of crossovers to other encoding schemes, such as MARC 21 and Dublin Core. This allows easier movement of metadata across schema. This document would prove most useful to organizations that contribute their EAD documents to a union index. By applying uniform element entry across the board, the rules outlined in this handbook can improve search access, system interoperability, and coding efficiency. This work would function well as a supplement to the *EAD Tag Library, version 2002* (cited above), as it concerns itself with broader applications, rather than strictly local use.

This website, maintained by the EAD Roundtable of the Society of American Archivists, not only provides a great starting point for the new EAD user, but offers many tips and tools to those who are attempting to improve their EAD skills. Brief, but effective definitions of the standard EAD-related vocabulary are provided, along with links to the EAD schema, tag libraries, and best practices guidelines. The “tools & helper files” page provides links to useful websites and documents such as the Archon web application and the EAD Cookbook. One of the most useful sections of the website is the list of EAD implementers. Users can identify what organizations are currently utilizing EAD and view their encoding procedure and delivery mechanisms, as well as contact information. Other information within the site includes a bibliography of EAD articles, books, and reviews and links to EAD training and funding organizations. This website is the most comprehensive existing guide to EAD resources. The site provides solid introductory information for the novice and offers access to rich resources for the veteran looking for the most up-to-date materials.