Archival Description and the Archivists’ Toolkit at Princeton University

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Outline

- Background
  - Princeton
  - Tools

- Archivists’ Toolkit
  - Beta testing
  - For EAD
  - For MARC

- Case study: AT for non-archivists
Special Collections at Princeton

- Mudd Library
  - University Archives
  - Public Policy Papers

- Manuscripts Division
  - Literary collections
  - Holdings in Western Americana, New Jerseyana, Colonial period, faculty papers, and many other subjects

- Other small special collections
  - Engineering Library
  - Latin American Ephemera Collection
Background and tools for description

- EAD implemented in 2004.
- Coincided with review/implementation of DACS.
- Wide variety of tools used for EAD.
  - Oxygen
  - Word templates/macros
  - Spreadsheets
  - Individual databases
Background and tools for description, cont.

- Non-EAD description: even more tools.
  - ILS (Voyager)
  - Circa 20 legacy Access databases
- Even more databases for accessioning and other basic functions.
Archivists’ Toolkit

- Beta testing in Fall 2006.
- Implementation of AT for Mudd accessioning in Fall 2007.
Archivists’ Toolkit

What we like

- Promise of all divisions and repositories using the same tools for description.
- Multiple outputs from the same tool.
- Interface forces staff to think in terms of data (less in terms of free-form narrative descriptions).
AT and EAD

- Usability
  - Data entry
  - Review processes
- Import/export process issues
AT and MARC

- Import/export issues
  - Granularity
AT: The Big Issue

- Figuring out relation to current process and redesigning workflow.
  - Established decisions and best practice were not designed with toolkit in mind.
    - Template - <descgrp>s, attributes
    - Stylesheets
AT: The Big Issue

- Workflow
  - Integration with current tools and delivery systems.
    - Creation of EAD in AT - relatively straightforward
    - Importing current EADs - a little more complicated.
    - Relationship with ILS – even more complicated.
    - Accessioning

- Scalability questions

- Decisions still need to be made.
Case study: Archivists’ Toolkit for non-archivists

Princeton University Library: Engineering Library

- Large collection of technical reports
  - No staff available to catalog individually, no desire to catalog individually.
  - Available staff consists of one professional librarian and student assistant.

- EAD finding aids proposed as solution
  - No background in archival description or EAD.
Case study: Archivists’ Toolkit for non-archivists

- Processes
  - Met to discuss requirements, set minimum descriptive elements.
  - Installed toolkit, set up repository and logins (one for data entry, one for administration).
  - One brief demonstration/training session.
Case study: Archivists’ Toolkit for non-archivists

- Results
  - 10 finding aids produced.
  - Item level description for hundreds of reports.
  - Finding aids available soon
  - Goodwill for Archives/EAD project.

- Plan to use for important and underdescribed Latin American Ephemera Collection in fall.
Questions or comments?

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