

Building a National Archival Authorities Infrastructure

Assessment of Need

Audience

The primary audiences of *Building a National Archival Authorities Infrastructure* are the professional archival community, including manuscript librarians; the national repositories (National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Library of Congress (LoC), the Smithsonian Institution, and the National Park Service); state archives and libraries; research archives and libraries; state and regional archival consortia; and funding agencies and foundations. Secondary audiences are all cultural heritage professionals; OCLC Research; genealogists; documentary editors; and American Studies scholars (cultural, social, historical, and literary).

Need

As early as the 1960s, the archival community recognized that describing record creators independently of the description of records would improve both the efficiency and quality of archival description, but more importantly, would enhance access to and understanding of archival records for the users of archival resources.¹ In the 1980s, Richard Szary, Richard Lytle, and David Bearman, wrote several papers arguing the intellectual foundations and merits of archival authorities as a descriptive practice separate from the description of records.² In the early 1990s the American library community, led by the LoC, embarked on a cooperative cataloging program that soon included cooperative authority control.³ The library program provided additional proof of the economic and access benefits of authority control, and increased the archival community's understanding and interest. Many archivists within academic research archives, working in environments dominated by the bibliographic catalog, began participating.

Archivists, though, participated by default rather than from enthusiasm, because library authority control addressed only a subset of what archivists require from authority control. Library authority control standards and systems are inadequate for archival description because they are limited to name heading control, and therefore do not accommodate the more extensive descriptions required by archivists to provide sociohistorical context—a mainstay of archival description—for understanding archival resources. To achieve this, archivists needed an archival authority content standard; a technical communication standard; training in the use of the standards; and a place (metaphorically speaking) within which to cooperatively employ the standards.

In 1996 the International Council on Archives (ICA) released the first version of *International Standard Archival Authority Records—Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families (ISAAR (CPF))*. One of its principal objectives was enabling the separation of record and creator description by defining a separate though related content standard framework for archival authorities that would facilitate dedicated creation and maintenance of the data. The standard was intended to complement ICA's *General International Standard Archival Description (ISAD(G))*, the content framework for the description of archival records (including record creators). In 2004, the Society of American Archivists (SAA) published *Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACS)*.⁴ Parts II and III of *DACS* addressed archival authority control, thus providing one of the two standards needed for the American archival community to begin a cooperative authorities program similar to the library community's NACO.

Early in 2010, SAA released Encoded Archival Context—Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families (EAC—CPF), an XML-based communication standard for archival authorities.⁵ EAC—CPF is based on the second edition of ICA's *ISAAR(CPF)*, released in 2004. While working under the auspices of SAA, the Encoded Archival Context Working Group (EACWG) was international.⁶ With the release of EAC-CPF the American archival community had a communication standard for archival authorities, and with *DACS* it had the two foundational standards necessary to build a cooperative

authorities program. As yet, it lacks training in the use of the standards, and perhaps the most daunting, a place within which to practice authority control cooperatively. It is these two components that *Building a National Archival Authorities Infrastructure* will address.

Addressing the Need

In the spring of 2010, with funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities (IATH), University of Virginia, in collaboration with the School of Information, University of California, Berkeley and the California Digital Library, University of California embarked on the *Social Networks and Archival Context (SNAC)* project. The ongoing project has two primary goals: (1) to develop software for extracting the description of record creators and other people documented in the records, creating EAC-CPF records from the extracted descriptions, and matching and combining the EAC-CPF records with one another and with NACO, Getty Union List of Artist Names, and Virtual International Authority File (VIAF) authority records; and (2) to build a prototype historical resource and access system that demonstrates both the feasibility of the extraction and matching/combining techniques and unprecedented research utility of combining archival authority records from dispersed archives and archival access systems.

The project is still underway, but it has already generated considerable interest and support in the archival community, as well as in the broader cultural heritage and scholarly communities. The communities have found the integrated access to dispersed archival holdings, and the access to the biographical-historical data found in the records (notably the social-professional networks documented in the archival records and exposed by the archivists in the descriptions), particularly compelling, and many have asked if their data might be added. While project resources do not support expanding the data at this time, this widespread and enthusiastic interest suggests that *SNAC* is a compelling demonstration of the power of cooperative archival authorities to transform access and understanding of archival resources, and indeed all cultural heritage resources, and thus is a compelling rationale for building community support for establishing a *National Archival Authorities Cooperative (NAAC)*.

Building a National Archival Authorities Infrastructure will address the need for training archivists in the use of EAC-CPF and take the initial steps towards a *National Archival Authorities Cooperative*. Professional training will be coordinated by Simmons College Graduate School of Library and Information Science, in collaboration with the Society of American Archivists' (SAA) continuing education program. IATH will organize a meeting bringing major stakeholders in the archive and library communities together to build support for and to begin the planning necessary to establish a sustainable national archival authorities cooperative program. In order to develop a detailed, thoughtful plan, the project director will also recruit a team of twelve leading experts in administration and community-based governance of cooperative or consortial programs, and in the technological infrastructure for collaborative maintenance and publication of descriptive data. This team of experts will play leading roles in the meeting, and subsequent to the meeting will assist the project director in developing a blueprint for NAAC based on ideas generated in the meeting. There will be two two-day meetings to facilitate the team vetting and reconciling various possible models and then developing a comprehensive blueprint for a national cooperative authorities program. This will be broadly distributed as a white paper to the cultural heritage and end-user communities, in particular among scholarly communities known to be heavy users of archive and manuscript resources.

Related Projects

While SAA has begun offering a professional EAC-CPF training workshop, this project will vastly expand the number of workshops offered, and ameliorate the costs by offering the workshops regionally, and by offering scholarships to offset the workshop fee.

The nearest analog to the proposed NAAC is the NACO cooperative library authorities program, administered by LoC.⁷ While serving as a model for community-based cooperative authority control, the underlying standards used do not address the detailed contextual description required by archivists.

VIAF, hosted and operated by OCLC Research, is a collaboration between national libraries.⁸ VIAF aggregates and interrelates authority records maintained in national catalogs. As such it is not a cooperative authorities program, but resource based on collecting and interrelating the records created by such systems.

ULAN, the Union List of Artist Names, is a component of the Getty Vocabulary Program.⁹ It resembles VIAF in that it aggregates authority records from other institutions and projects, but differs in that a team of editors at the Getty augments machine loading, processing, and aggregation of batches of records. The ULAN description is similar to archival processing in that it extends beyond authority control as such, though does not cover all of the descriptive components deemed necessary by archivists for contextual description.

National Library of Australia (NLA) Party Infrastructure (formerly People Australia) is an EAC-CPF program that is aggregating authority records contributed by a broad range of cultural heritage repositories.¹⁰ It is similar to VIAF in that it involves batching loading and maintenance of the records, but differs in the diversity of cultural heritage contributors. NLA contributes to VIAF.

None of these programs addresses the specific archival descriptive needs and objectives of the proposed NAAC. NAAC would complement both NACO and ULAN, though addressing a much more inclusive range of people than are in scope in bibliographic and museum description. The people described in each of these domains (authors or subjects of published resources and artists) are a subset of the range of people described by archivists, which is virtually anyone or everyone. It is anticipated, though, that NAAC would contribute records to VIAF, if invited to do so.

Impact

The immediate result of the EAC-CPF training will be greater skill and abilities in the currently active library and archives workforce, but over time archival educators who receive the training will incorporate their new knowledge into archival studies programs, ensuring that the future workforce will be equip with the same skills and abilities. The training will be geographically distributed, so that participants will have minimal travel expenses. Scholarships will cover the workshop fee, reducing the cost of participation for many to zero. This geographic diversity and economic support mean that the training can benefit multiple institutions and diverse constituencies. Widespread use of archival authority standards will transform existing practice, and this transformation will ultimately enhance end-user access to and understanding of archival (and, indeed, all) cultural heritage resources.

The white paper for NAAC will propose a program to transform archival descriptive practice and at the same time revolutionize access by providing unprecedented integrated access to distributed resources and to the sociohistorical context in which the resources were created. This will have a broad and profound impact on archives and manuscript libraries, and their respective professional communities, but also will have a broader impact on libraries, museums, and the curators of historical monuments and sites. Such a cooperative necessarily would become a complementary partner with national and international library and museum authorities programs, such as NACO, VIAF, and ULAN.

The impact for end-users would also be revolutionary. Today, access to archival resources is distributed, meaning that users must know where to look and that they must look in different places, for example, to find all of the archival records associated with one person. The interrelations between creators and other corporate bodies, persons, and families documented in records must currently be identified and painstakingly "stitched together" by the users. The use of EAC-CPF in a cooperative maintained archival authority file would provide users with a single place to find all archival resources (as well as related cultural heritage and relevant web resources), and, at the same time, have access to the social and professional networks within which the resources were created.

Diversity Plan

Ensuring the diversity of both the archives and professional audience reached by the EAC-CPF workshops will be addressed in three ways. First, by offering the seven professional training workshops regionally, travel expenses associated with the training will be kept to a minimum. Second, the twenty scholarships awarded for each of seven workshops will cover the workshop registration fee, further reducing the expense of participating. Finally, SAA will include in the marketing email to the Diversity Committee and the Archives and Archivists of Color and Native American Archives Roundtables.

The proposed NAAC is intended to provide an essential service to archival repositories of all types, and the project will address this by inviting a wide range of archival leaders representing a full range of repositories. The proposed NAAC planning meetings will also include representatives of allied professionals in the library, museum, genealogical, and scholarly communities.

It is worth noting that the project director is serving as a consultant to the HistoryMakers' IMLS funded "Fellowship, Mentoring, and Placement Program," which has the objective of increasing African-American archival professionals. In this regard, the project director taught an EAC-CPF workshop for the twelve fellows in the program in June 2010.

Project Design and Evaluation

Katherine Wisser, co-director, will teach seven one-day regional EAC-CPF workshops through the SAA's continuing education program. Wisser has developed a curriculum for the workshop, which will first be offered at the SAA Annual Conference in August 2010. The workshop will be offered in multiple locations strategically selected to ensure maximum participation. To encourage participation, twenty scholarships covering the registration fee will be offered for each of the seven workshops, for a total of 140 competitive scholarships. A Scholarship Selection Committee, coordinated by Wisser, will review applications and make the awards. Given the project's objective of not only increasing knowledge and skill in the use of EAC-CPF, but also encouraging implementation of the standard, applicants that demonstrate institution planning for or consideration of implementation will be favored in the selection process. Archival educators who express an interest in learning EAC-CPF in order to incorporate it into their curriculum will also be favored in the process.

Meeting One: Spring 2012

In order to build support for the development of NAAC, the project director will plan a one and one-half day meeting and invite forty leading members of the archival community (federal and state government, business, and research archives); representatives of funding agencies and foundations; representatives from national repositories; representatives of the genealogical, documentary editing, and American studies (cultural, historical, and literary scholars) communities. Two representatives of the international community will also be invited to attend. OCLC Research, as the host for VIAF, will also be invited to send one or two representatives. Prior to the meeting, from among those invited to the meeting, the project director will recruit a team of twelve leading experts in

administration and community-based governance of cooperative or consortial programs, and in the technological infrastructure for collaborative maintenance and publication of descriptive data, including expertise in crowd sourcing and Linked Open Data (LOD) technologies. The team will assist the project director in building consensus and support among the various stakeholders and, following the meeting, in developing a blueprint for NAAC.

The meeting will be divided into three half-day sessions. The first session will have presentations on the history of and differences in library, archival, and museum authorities; rationales for an archival cooperative authorities; an overview of the EAC-CPF standard; and a description and demonstration of the SNAC project, focusing on the prototype public historical resource and access system. The second session will be devoted to breakout sessions that will begin the process of exploring and determining business, governance, and technological models for establishing and sustaining a NAAC. The business group will focus on where the cooperative might be hosted or located; staffing (both kinds of staff and approximate number); a funding model, and so on. The governance group will consider how best to organize community-based determination of policy and best practice guidelines; determination of essential professional qualifications for contributing to maintenance of authority data; training of contributors; and the like. Finally, the technological group will focus on developing a set of professional and end-user functional requirements and identifying a range of robust, proven technologies that might be brought together to realize the requirements. The third and final session will be devoted to reports and recommendations for next steps from the breakout sessions. The expected outcome of the breakout session reports and following discussion will be a consensus rough sketch or set of options for establishing and building a sustainable infrastructure for NAAC.

Following the meeting, the team of experts will evaluate the ideas that emerged and issue a report outlining the candidate business, governance, and technological models with an evaluation of the strengths and weakness of each. Given that the three areas of focus are inextricably interrelated, the team must focus on reconciling and refining the details of each in order that the various components of the model form a comprehensive and coherent whole. The team will report its preliminary findings and solicit feedback from the full group and, as necessary, from additional stakeholders identified in the ongoing discussion. They will also develop and carryout a research strategy for gathering additional information.

Meeting Two: Fall 2012

The research team will meet for two days at NARA. The objective of this meeting will be to synthesize the feedback from the larger group and additional information gathered, and to develop a detailed outline of the essential business, administrative, and technological components of the national cooperative. The attendees will split out into small groups with specific tasks. The professional and end-user functional requirements and essential technological components of a sustainable integrated maintenance and public access system will be identified. The business team will consider the number and types of staff necessary for starting and sustaining the program, essential business functions, estimate startup and maintenance costs. Various funding models will also be considered. The primary administrative focus will be on how best to provide professional representative community-based governance. To succeed, the program must serve the interests of the professional archival community, its descriptive needs as well as its public service objectives. The research team, using models that have been successful in similar endeavors, will propose a governance model that balances the interests of a to-be-determined host organization and the community. The meeting will produce a detailed outline that addresses all of the components of the proposed program with an action plan for fully developing the outline into a blueprint for a national archival authorities cooperative program.

Post-meeting activities

Following this meeting, the research team will circulate the detailed outline and action plan to the full group for feedback. Other stakeholders and additional experts will be consulted as necessary. Based on the feedback and additional information gathered, the team will begin drafting the final whitepaper. When the initial draft is completed, it too will be circulated with a solicitation for feedback to the full group and more broadly, to the archival community in particular, but also to the broader cultural heritage professional community, scholarly communities (in particular the American studies communities), and genealogy community. After gathering the further comments and suggestions, the research team will begin the revision of the draft blueprint.

Meeting Three: Spring 2013

The research team will gather for a final meeting at NARA for two days. The objective for this meeting will be to further refine the draft blueprint in preparation for a final call for comment. The primary basis for the refinement will be to address comments that have been gathered, and to incorporate suggestions.

Publication of White Paper: September 2013

Following the meeting, the project working with project editor will incorporate all changes decided on in the final meeting. The final white paper will be submitted to the full group for its approval in late summer of 2013, and published in September 2013. See the Communication section (below) for discussion of distribution of the final product.

Project Resources: Budget, Personnel, and Management Plan

Budget

The budget includes personnel costs, workshop scholarships, and travel for the meetings and workshops. The personnel costs are for project director Daniel Pitti, co-project director Katherine Wisser, and editor and project manager Sarah Wells, and are partially covered by cost share by the University of Virginia and Simmons College. The scholarships are for attendees at the seven workshops that co-project director Wisser will be offering and for travel costs for the three workshops (for non-federal attendees). Other travel costs are for a planning meeting at NARA at the beginning of the grant period.

Personnel

Daniel Pitti, project director. Pitti is associate director of IATH. Pitti will be responsible for overall management of *Building a National Archival Authorities Infrastructure*. In consultation with the co-director and as necessary with others, he will be responsible, in particular, for inviting leaders in and representatives of the archive and other cultural heritage communities (including research and government repositories), scholarly communities, and funding agencies and foundations; and for selecting the team of experts that will address business, governance, and technological requirements for establishing a sustainable national archival authorities cooperative program. He will supervise Wells in organizing the three meetings. With the assistance of the team of experts, he will coordinate meeting discussions, the research and development activities of the team of experts, and the writing of the white paper.

Katherine Wisser, co-project director. Wisser is an Associate Professor and Co-Director of the Archives/History Dual Degree Program at the Simmons College Graduate School of Library and Information Science. She will coordinate and lead the Scholarship Selection Committee (SCC), and teach the seven regional workshops. She will work with SAA's Education Department to schedule individual workshops and establish a timeline for the scholarship application process and registration process. Wisser will facilitate discussions for each round of scholarships and communicate with

successful recipients to receive confirmation of attendance before submitting the list of scholarship recipients to SAA along with registration costs. Wisser will monitor the workshop evaluations and will conduct a survey of all scholarship participants at the completion of the workshop project to assess this professional development and implementation strategy. She will also attend the NARA meetings, as both co-PI on the project and co-chair of the TS-EAC

Sarah Wells, editor and project manager. Wells is the Scholarly and Technical Communications Officer at IATH. She will work with the project director in organizing the three principal meetings, serve as the recorder of the meetings, and assist in the writing and editing of the white paper.

The Scholarship Selection Committee will consist of Wisser and:

- Solveig De Sutter, Director of Education at SAA
- Julie Graham, Archival Collections Processing Librarian, Performing Arts Special Collections, UCLA. Graham serves on the Education Committee for SAA
- Jerry Simmons, Authority Team Lead in Information Services at NARA, and a member of the SAA TS-EAC

Management Plan

IATH will provide overall management of the project. The project director has extensive experience in managing complex programs and projects, and in working collaboratively in the development of international standards and establishing collaborative and cooperative programs.

The SAA continuing education program, under the supervision of De Sutter, will administer the seven regional EAC-CPF workshops. De Sutter will use SAA's existing policies, procedures, and practices in administering the workshops. For each of the seven workshops, twenty scholarships will be awarded. Co-project director Wisser will coordinate with De Sutter to incorporate the scholarship application into the regular SAA workshop application procedures. Wisser will manage the competitive workshop scholarship application and award process. The awarding of scholarships will be based on the recommendation of the Scholarship Selection Committee. For each recipient of an award, SAA will invoice Simmons College, which will be responsible for disbursement of the award funds. Wisser will manage all travel associated with the teaching of the workshops. Travel cost reimbursement will be compliant with Simmons College policy and procedures, and state and federal regulations and laws.

The project director and Wells, working closely with NARA staff, will be responsible for organizing all three NAAC planning meetings. With the assistance of Wells and the team of experts, the project director will be responsible for coordinating the research and development activities of the team of experts, and the writing of the white paper. Reimbursements for travel to the NAAC planning meetings will be processed by the IATH administrative assistant and will be subject to University policies and procedures, and state and federal regulations and law.

Communication Plan

Upon award of the grant, the project will announced the award with a description of the two principal parts of the project, the seven regional EAC-CPF workshops and the complementary initiative to begin planning a national archival authorities cooperative program. The announcement will be sent directly to a variety of professional organizations and lists. (See below for a list of organizations and lists, which will be expanded as opportunity suggests.) SAA will market the EAC-CPF workshops through its web site, and print and online publications, and information services. SAA's marketing strategy involves announcing workshops to a variety of archival listservs, the *In the*

Loop Newsletter, emails to members and nonmembers in the SAA database, and contacts in the states where workshops are offered to publicize to their constituencies.

A critical strategy in establishing a national archival authorities program will be building community support, and such support will depend on developing a plan that serves the mission of the archival and allied communities, and the end-user communities served by them. In part the strategy for realizing this objective will be based on choosing recognized leaders and experts in the community to participate in the planning process. It will also be critical that, as the discussions of the leaders and the work of the experts develops, drafts of the plan are circulated with calls for comments and suggestions. This will be done at each stage of the planning process, as described in the Project Design and Evaluation above.

The final white paper will be distributed to the same audiences that will be engaged throughout the project.

Organizations

Association Documentary Editing
Council of State Archivists
Society of American Archivists
National Association of Government Archivists and Records Administrators
Federation of Genealogical Societies
Modern Language Association
American History Association
Social Science History Association

Lists

Humanist
Encoded Archival Description List
Archives List
H-Net
Archives & Archivists

Sustainability Plan

After the project, the objective of increasing the knowledge and skills of the archival community in the use of EAC-CPF will be sustained in three ways. First, SAA will continue to offer the workshops regionally. Second, it is anticipated that some of those receiving training will be archival educators and that they will incorporate the teaching of EAC-CPF into their archival training curriculum. Third, as those trained begin implementing EAC-CPF, they will themselves begin training others in the workplace. The uptake of EAD followed this basic pattern, with an initially high demand for workshops dropping off as the knowledge and skills of the community became self-sustaining.

The NAAC planning portion of this project presents a different sustainability challenge. The intention of *Building a National Archival Authorities* is to build broad and deep support for a national archival authorities cooperative program in the professional, federal repository, funding, and user communities, and this support will lead to a partnership that establishes a program with a sustainable business, governance, and technological infrastructure.

¹ See Peter Scott, "The Record Group Concept: A Case for Abandonment" *American Archivist* 29 (October 1966).

² Richard H. Lytle, "Intellectual Access to Archives," *American Archivist* 43 (Winter and Spring 1980); Lytle and David A. Bearman, "The Power of the Principle of Provenance," *Archivaria* 21 (Winter

1985-1986); Bearman and Richard Szary, "Beyond Authorized Headings, Authorities as Reference Files in a Multi-disciplinary Setting." In "Authority Control Symposium." Occasional Papers of the Art Library Society of North America, no. 6 (Tucson: Art Library Society of North America, 1987).

³ The program is currently named the Program for Cooperative Cataloging and the name authorities component is named NACO.

⁴ *Describing Archives: A Content Standard* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2004).

⁵ See <http://eac.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/> for additional information on the standard.

⁶ The SAA Standards Committee reorganized both the Encoded Archival Description Working Group (EADWG) and the Encoded Archival Context Working Group (EACWG) in 2010, following the release of EAC-CPF. The EADWG has been replaced by the Technical Subcommittee–Encoded Archival Description (TS–EAD) and the EACWG by the Technical Subcommittee–Encoded Archival Context (TS–EAC). The two subcommittees are co-chaired, with one chair being an SAA member, and the other chair from outside the North America.

⁷ For additional information see <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/pcc/naco/>

⁸ For additional information see <http://viaf.org/>

⁹ For additional information see <http://www.getty.edu/research/tools/vocabularies/ulan/index.html>

¹⁰ For additional information see <https://wiki.nla.gov.au/display/ARDCPIP/People+Australia+overview>