

# The Primary Source

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## Editor's Note

Welcome to the first online issue of *The Primary Source*. Our hope is to continue to provide useful information to a broad audience curious about archival matters. The electronic format is freely available and will be published by the Society of Mississippi Archivists twice a year. A print newsletter, also published twice a year, will be mailed to SMA members.

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Several years ago, I attended a session at the Society of American Archivists annual meeting where, in a moment of exasperation during the q&a, one of the attendees stated, "I'm an archivist, not a cataloger!" The sentiment is not an unfamiliar one to those of us charged with describing archives and special collections materials according to what were, at the time, emerging standards made necessary by electronic capture and delivery of finding aids and ever-increasing digitization projects requiring metadata for individual objects.

In the interceding years, some academic libraries have been experimenting with reallocation of personnel and restructuring departments to best sync the work with the expertise. A special collections cataloger may be administratively part of the Special Collections Department, but spend part or all of their time in Technical Services. Conversely, Technical Services may send a cataloger or two to Special Collections according to a routine schedule. Both areas of expertise are necessary to create the best records for researchers. All of the finding guides, card files, pathfinders, databases, lists and bibliographies in the world will not get the record into the OPAC and bundle the record with similar works in a search result. Skills that may be described as "cataloging-esque" are fundamental to our mission of exposing hidden materials by creating metadata that may be sorted, manipulated, and most importantly, shared.

"The Cataloging Issue" of *The Primary Source* approaches the topic from three angles. Kathy Wells offers a handy guide to cataloging rare books. Ms. Wells' clear and informative piece, "Special Collections Cataloging: Rare Books," should prove particularly helpful to the archivist without a background in librarianship. Most readers will not expect to laugh at an article called "Cataloging Community Cookbooks," or "Cataloging -" anything for that matter. Hans Rasmussen finds a way in his amusing essay about a very special collection. Chatham Ewing's article captures the archival dilemma behind "I'm an archivist, not a cataloger!" as he outlines the strategies he and his colleagues worked through to create MARC records for their manuscript collections in "Process and Product: Jump-Starting Archival Cataloging."

Enjoy.

Peggy Price  
Editor

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# Special Collections Cataloging: Rare Books

Kathleen L. Wells, Senior Catalog Librarian, University of Southern Mississippi Libraries

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What is a rare book? Age may be the first factor to spring to mind, but uniqueness of binding, edition (first or limited), inscriptions or annotations by authors or well-known owners, and size of print runs may cause more contemporary materials to be considered rare. While a standard AACR2 catalog record provides a general description of a book, it may obscure differences between different printings or "manifestations" of that particular work. (Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials (Books), X.1.2) Researchers are generally more interested in the contents of a book than in the container. However, in the case of rare materials, the physical book itself may be an object of research. The aim of a catalog record for a rare book, then, is to describe the volume and its contents as thoroughly as possible. An individual copy of a rare book can be unique as to binding, annotations, pagination errors, illustrations, etc. Since all of these specifics may be of interest to researchers, rare book cataloging can include much more detail than a "regular" catalog record. The following brief summary outlines some descriptive elements in the creation of rare book records.

## Title.

Some sixteenth- and seventeenth-century books, in particular, may have very long titles; they may also include a summary of the work's contents on the title page, as well as mention of the author's other works, academic qualifications, etc. Transcription of lengthy title page information is much more complete for rare books than for non-rare materials. However, information on the title page that is not part of the title or statement of responsibility, such as an epigram, invocation, or statement of privilege (which states that the publisher has governmental permission to issue the work), is not transcribed as part of the title; such information may be included in a note if considered important. Despite the cataloger's itch to correct and improve, diacritics should not be supplied in the title transcription if they do not appear on the title page.

Archaic letters (use of I for J and V for U) are usually transcribed as they appear, with the following exception: if it is necessary to convert the letters to a different case (for example, if the title proper appears in all caps, it must be transcribed in lower case in the catalog record), the pattern of usage in the rest of the publication should be followed. The name Julius may appear on the title page in all caps as IVLIVS, and in the text of the book in lower case as Iulius. If the text consistently uses lower-case u to represent "u," the name should be transcribed in the title field as Iulius. DCRM(B) provides a table of transcription for the cataloger to follow when no pattern of usage can be identified. If no shift of case is involved, archaic letters should be transcribed as they appear on the title page:

Les poemes spiritvels dv sievr de Nerveze.

Give modernized form as variant title: Poèmes spirituels du sieur de Nervèze

## Imprint.

The place, publisher and date should be given in the catalog record as they appear on the title page. Note that dates in Roman numerals may be followed by the modernized date in parentheses.

A Amsterdam ; A Leipzig : Chez Arkstée & Merkus, 1754.

Venetiis : Apud Nicolaum Pezzana, MDCCL (1750).

Detailed printing statements, which may run to three or more lines, may be curtailed with a mark of omission:

London : Printed for W. Strahan, J.F. and C. Rivington ... [etc.], 1779.

### Physical description.

Unlike the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR2), which has simplified physical description statements, a rare book's statement of extent should account for every leaf in the volume as issued by the publisher (DCRM(B), B1.1). This includes leaves of plates and blank leaves, though it does not include leaves added as part of the binding.

[3] leaves, ix, 273, 116 p., [2] leaves of plates : ill. ; 20 cm.

If the record is for a multi-volume set, the cataloger may include the number of volumes in the extent of item statement and give pagination for each volume in a note.

When looking at a bibliographic record for a rare book, one thing that may stand out is the signature statement. These combinations of letters, numbers and symbols resemble arcane mathematical formulas at first glance. DCRM(B) defines a signature as

A letter, numeral, symbol, or a group of such characters, printed at the foot of the rectos of the first few leaves of an intended gathering for the purpose of aiding binders in correctly assembling the sections.

*Gatherings* are defined as:

One or more pairs of leaves-made up of a folded sheet, a fraction of a sheet, or several folded sheets tucked one inside another-that together form a distinct unit for binding purposes.

Signature notes are formulated according to Philip Gaskell's *A New Introduction to Bibliography* (Oak Knoll Press, 1995). In addition to the signature note, the format of the book-i.e., whether it is a folio (two leaves per gathering), quarto (four leaves per gathering), etc.-may be given in abbreviated form at the end of the extent of item statement:

x, 256 p. ; 25 cm. (4to)

Here is a sample signature note:

Signatures: pi<sup>2</sup> A<sup>4</sup> B-H<sup>6</sup> chi<sup>2</sup>

The superscript numbers represent the number of leaves per gathering. The terms "pi" and "chi" are used to indicate unsigned leaves that fall outside the signature sequence; such leaves may be found at the beginning or end of the text, or between sections of text. This book has a gathering of four leaves "signed" with a capital A, followed by gatherings of six leaves signed with the letters B through H.

In some books, the signature sequence includes non-alphabetic characters (asterisks, daggers, etc.). These are given in the signature sequence as they appear on the page.

Signatures: \*-2\*<sup>12</sup>A-2Z<sup>12</sup> a-i<sup>12</sup> (-i11,12)

In this example, all the gatherings have twelve leaves. The first gathering is signed with a single asterisk, followed by a gathering with double asterisk. The alphabetic sequence runs from A-Z, then starts over with AA-ZZ (this is summarized by putting a 2 in front of the Z in the signature sequence). Then the signatures go to small single letters from a through i. In the final gathering, leaves 11 and 12 are missing, indicated by the minus sign in parentheses. Signature statements, like extent of item statements, are expected to account for every leaf in the published book.

In some cases pages may be signed with characters or illustrations that cannot be represented in a bibliographic record due to the limitations of the character set in use. The example below has pages signed with a section mark (§), which is not in the American Library Association character set used to create catalog records. In such a case, the symbol is represented by its spelled-out form.

Signatures, v. 1: [section mark]<sup>4</sup> A-2C(<sup>8</sup>2C-8)

While inclusion of a signature statement is not required, it is recommended for incunabula (books printed in Europe before 1500), and may be useful to researchers when given for later works as well.

#### Other notes.

Besides the signatures, other physical characteristics of the book may be given in notes, including characteristics that apply only to the library's copy:

Decorative head- and tail-pieces.

Title vignette.

McCain Library copy bound in calf over wooden boards with evidence of metal clasps now wanting.

Illustrators and engravers, whose names may not appear in the statement of responsibility, can be listed in a note:

Engraved illustrations signed variously I.P.F., Suor I.P.F., Suor Isabella P.F., Suor Isabella Piccini F.

The names of various illustrators (N. Blakey, Delamonce, F. Hayman, Ant. Walker, S. Wale) and engravers (C.F. Fritzsich, J. Punt, Sysang) appear on the plates.

Publishers' advertising material at end of text may be of value to researchers:

"Catalogue de livres qui se trouvent chez Arkstée et Merkus, Libraires a Amsterdam & a Leipzig": [23] p. at end of vol. 6.

Sometimes a book will contain enclosures inserted by former owners; these can range from scraps of paper used as bookmarks to printed advertisements to pressed flowers. An enclosure may have research value; if this is deemed to be the case, a note about the enclosure should be added to the catalog record:

McCain Library copy has insert: prayer card in Italian dated 1870-1871, marking the

25th anniversary of the pontificate of Pius IX.

Many if not most older books contain handwritten information: the names of former owners, marginal notes, etc. The cataloger should include notes about this information if it is deemed important.

McCain Library copy has bookseller's note on inside back cover: "Première éd.--très rare"

McCain Library copy heavily annotated with marginal notes in German.

Cataloging rare books is an adventure. Particularly with older books, each volume is unique, carrying impressions of those through whose hands it has passed. Whether the item to be cataloged is a manuscript prayer book, laboriously hand-copied with delicate floral illustrations; or a printed eighteenth-century book bearing a date from the French revolutionary calendar, working with these materials provides an opportunity to touch history.

Note: The basic reference tool for cataloging rare books is *Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials* (Books), published by the Library of Congress Cataloging Distribution Service in 2007. DCRM(B) is also available online to LC Cataloger's Desktop subscribers.

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# Cataloging Community Cookbooks

Hans Rasmussen, Special Collections Cataloger, Louisiana State University

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Whether issued by a public grammar school, a clapboard country church, or a starched-tablecloth ladies' volunteer society, a community cookbook belongs to a class wholly different from any other type of book in your library. Its clunky typeface, weak binding, tacky section dividers, and utterly nonsensical title pages plainly give away its proletarian origins. Of course, for the purposes of scholarship, there is nothing at all wrong with such humble beginnings. While once exiled by elitist librarians to the lowly and shameful book sale shelf hidden away in the corner, community cookbooks are now well recognized as rich sources for studying women's and community history and have achieved a deserved place in library special collections. The collection of Mississippi cookbooks at McCain Library & Archives at The University of Southern Mississippi (USM), from which I honed the special skills and undying patience needed to catalog these items, provided the examples featured in this article. Despite the community cookbook's new trendy status, their modest birth still ought to be a warning to catalogers that they are not at all easy to describe in a MARC catalog record.

The challenge in cataloging community cookbooks derives largely from the confusing layout of their title pages. Assuming a cookbook even has one -- and a sizeable minority do not -- the title page very likely makes no sense at all. The publishers of cookbooks usually recognize that a title page is needed and will prepare something that sort of looks like one, but the information on it appears without any rhyme or reason. Words that may or may not be titles, authors, publishers, printers, or something else fill up the space on the chief source of information without any structure or clarity. For instance, *Neighborhood Delights* is the title on the title page of the unusually attractive cookbook from the New Fellowship Baptist Church in Seminary, but page ii bears the title *A Book of Favorite Recipes* and the name of the compilers, the Ladies Auxiliary of New Fellowship Baptist Church. I really do not know which title the ladies auxiliary wanted to give to its book or if *A Book of Favorite Recipes* is even a title -- it might be something else altogether -- but I accepted *Neighborhood Delights* for 245 |a because that is the title that actually made it to the title page for whatever reason. Although the names of the compilers do not show up until page ii, they still get recognition in 245 |c, but in brackets.

Similar confusion can emerge further on in the 245 title field as well. The cover of *The Holy Smoke Cookbook* of Riverside Independent Methodist Church, in addition to a rather disturbing, appetite suppressing illustration of a dreadfully emaciated chef and waiter, bears the phrase "Compiled by 4th, 5th & 6th Grades." To make things a bit worse, the other side of its front cover gives compilation credit to five named adults. I chose the adults to fill subfield c because they obviously performed the work of producing the cookbook from recipes collected by the schoolchildren. This fact lent weight to the decision to accept p. [2] of the cover as the substitute title page -- the book lacked an actual title page -- when the cover itself could just as easily have gotten star billing in this absurd dilemma. In consolation, the plucky kids still got a mention in a 500 field note.

Another quality that makes cataloging community cookbooks so confusing is that so many are published by commercial cookbook publishers headquartered in the Midwest. USM has two cookbooks entitled *A Book of Favorite Recipes* from the Woodlawn United Pentecostal Church and the Sylvarena Baptist Church because both contracted with Circulation Service of Shawnee Mission, Kansas, which used the same pre-printed title pages for each. Sadly, a more frequent

occurrence than a hackneyed title pawned off on hundreds of unsuspecting church ladies' groups is the complete lack of any title at all. These companies tend to pay very little attention to the sensibleness of their layouts and composition and commonly neglect even assigning a title; thus, applying unusual cover titles is a regrettably common practice in community cookbook cataloging. *Mary Lou Carlin Circle Baptist Young Women* and *Georgetown Baptist Church*, both published by Kansas-based Cookbook Publishers Inc., are cover titles born in the tradition of AACR2 rule 1.1B3 that accepts the name of the responsible body as the title proper if that is all there is to use. The cookbook from the Woodlawn Church of God in Columbia, published by Lawrence G. Prince Company, not only has no title page, but nothing that even appears to be a deliberate title. Ultimately, I had to use a Biblical quotation appearing on the cover even though I knew it was only part of the cover artwork along with the collage of a cross, a candle, a loaf of bread, and an ear of corn. These were the only words that could pass as a title under even the most creative reasoning. Thus, this particular cookbook is available to the world under the horribly awkward name "*I am the Bread of Life*" John 6:35.

Trouble with cover titles also may demand occasional use of the 246 field for varying forms of title. The Baptist Young Women of Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Brookhaven named their cookbook *A Collection of Recipes* on its title page, but Fundcraft Publishing of Collierville, Tennessee, printed the title *Sugar 'n Spice for recipes so nice!* on the cover. Although I wanted to assume that the slogan simply was part of the cover illustration along with the cheesy picture of a Strawberry Shortcake look alike exposing her bloomers while reaching into a cupboard, its wording and prominence made it resemble a title too much to ignore. Thus, it found its place in a 246 field for a separate title appearing on the cover. Similarly, the Military Baptist Church of Sumrall neglected to inform Cookbook Publishers Inc. about what if any title to give its collected recipes. Consequently, lacking any obvious title to use, I had to impose *Kissin' Wears Out...Cookin don't!*, the folk wisdom inscribed around the cover illustration of an overly amorous Victorian husband bothering his pert young bride at the stove in a prosaic scene of *fin de siècle* domestic happiness. If the title was not disappointing enough, its contracted gerunds mandated the use of a 246 field to restate this connubial insight with the words kissing and cooking spelled out for those patrons not searching with loose phrasing.

Often more troublesome than clarifying a title is deciding just who actually published a cookbook. Sometimes the name of the publisher is obvious. The first page of *Seasoned with Love at First Presbyterian Church of Hattiesburg* clearly declares it was published by Cookbooks by Morris Press of Kearney, Nebraska. Similarly, *Feeding Our Flock* from Spring Hill United Pentecostal Church in Wesson undoubtedly was published by Fundcraft Publishing, although you have to turn over five pages before you discover that fact. Unfortunately, other cookbook publishers are not so easy to identify. *Blessings from Our Kitchen* is the cover title of the cookbook produced by the Eddie McDonald Circle of St. Paul United Methodist Women in Hattiesburg. The prominence of the organization's name on the cover ought to suggest it is the publisher, but Cookbook Publishers Inc. is the declared publisher on page [2]. The title page of *Neighborhood Delights* also prominently features the name of the church that produced it, but in this case the New Fellowship Baptist Church in Seminary is the publisher because the G&R Publishing Company of Waverly, Iowa, is identified clearly as the printer on the title page's verso. Likewise, the place of publication of *Into the Second Century: Favorite Recipes of French Camp Academy* is French Camp, Mississippi, both because of its prominence on the title page and the identification of Wimmer Brothers Books of Memphis as only the printer on page 2. And the publisher? Probably French Camp Academy itself, but officially only [s.n.]. Admittedly, as much as I want to trust that identified publishers and printers actually did what they are credited as having done -- and so much of cataloging is based on such blind, hopeful trust -- I still know that community cookbook creators use the words publish and print



arbitrarily without much thought as to what these words precisely mean, so even seemingly clear statements on production may not be worth nearly as much as they seem. Anyway, whether the issuing organization is the publisher or not, it still should receive additional recognition in an added entry field (710).

The need to estimate a date of publication is also a very common chore with community cookbooks as undated titles are not at all rare. An inscription from a donor to an ungrateful recipient may suggest a date, as may some hint in the text. The undated *Hawkins Recipes* was sold to raise money to send Hawkins Junior High School students from Hattiesburg to Washington, D.C. in 1996, thereby hinting at a possible date of publication. While indirectly stated publication dates are not uncommon, other investigative powers are needed to estimate dates for other books. I dated *Microwave Cooking* by the Mississippi Power Company to sometime during the golden age of microwave cookery in the 1980s owing to the drawing of the antique faux wood-paneled microwave oven on its cover and the common knowledge that by the early 1990s everyone had pretty much accepted that it was impossible to actually cook anything in a microwave. Similarly, I judged the Mississippi Nurses' Association's *Miss. R.N. in the Kitchen* as probably belonging to the early 1960s from the style of its binding; the simple, minimal appearance of its advertisements; the drawing of the stylistically pretty nurse on the cover; and the demeaning "recipe for preserving a husband" on page 139.

The elements in the physical description field (300) can become quite annoying to describe when strictly interpreting cataloging rules in the face of a poorly prepared publication. Awkward page numbering schemes are very, very common in community cookbooks. Something like "A-D, 90, A-G, [18] p., [18] p. of plates" is a regrettably common string for subfield a. Counting unnumbered plates can become awfully tiresome as well. Almost every cookbook includes unnumbered card stock pages separating the hors d'oeuvres from the poultry from the desserts. Since these pages lie outside the regular numeration scheme and usually are printed on both sides, they should be counted as unnumbered pages of plates. When supplied by cookbook publishing companies, these dividers commonly bear photographs of especially garish food collages heavy on lacquered hams, deeply stratified casseroles, and excessively-frosted sheet cakes that look like the product of a socially ambitious yet emotionally unstable WASP hostess on Prozac. As painfully unappetizing as it all might appear, they are still illustrations and count as such in subfield b. The simple line drawings that the locally-produced cookbooks tend to use in their section dividers are also illustrations, but these always possess an honest, unpretentious dignity sadly missing in the industrialized cookbooks trucked out of America's heartland.

The 5XX notes fields seldom are problematic, although some cookbooks include an index in the back that really is not one. For example, the otherwise refreshingly coherent *Mississippi Dessert Cookbook* from Southeastern Baptist College in Laurel and the Women's Missionary Auxiliary of the Baptist Missionary Association of Mississippi includes an index that, upon closer inspection, is really a table of contents and thus should not be mentioned in a note field. This kind of thing is not uncommon in community cookbooks. They are kind of like those weird European novels that put the table of contents strangely in the back and call it a "register" or something.

At USM, we used the same three 6XX fields for all community cookbooks, thus making subject description very uncomplicated and uniform. Following LCSH's directions for describing books on an individual cooking style in a specific locale, we applied the paired subject headings "Cookery, American--Southern style" and "Cookery--Mississippi" to each record. They were joined by the very handy genre index term "Community cookbooks." The first subject heading accounted for the classification number TX715.2.S68 (Home economics--Cookery--Cookbooks--1800- --American--By style of cookery, A-Z--Southern style) that we applied to all community cookbooks in our

collection. Occasionally I added another subject term if obviously needed, but it was something quite rare to do. For instance, cookbooks limited to a specific type of cooking might warrant the application of an additional term like "Desserts" or "Cookery (Seafood)." *A Taste of Christmas*, a booklet comprised of photocopied leaves and bound with red construction paper and staples, probably was a homemade cookbook intended for distribution only to the families that had contributed to it. The rather snooty, patrician style of the language ("Christmas Eve buffet supper at the John Does'," "New Year's Day brunch at the Joseph Smiths'," etc.) and my own hasty research identifying some of the families as rather prominent in Hattiesburg society tempted me to add the subject heading "Upper class families--Mississippi--Hattiesburg" to the record. My supervisor checked my eagerness by vetoing the term, which was probably a good decision.

For what it might be worth, it seems to me that community cookbooks produced locally tend to be much clearer and easier to catalog than those published by out-of-state companies. Home-grown cookbooks have clearer title pages, less murky publication credits, and more consistent page numeration than their outsourced competitors. The Mississippi-produced *Cooking by the Book* offers an unambiguous cover title and the plain declaration "Published by the Mississippi Library Association, September 1988." It clearly names its editor and other contributors and thankfully includes no plates, only recipes. The one community cookbook in USM's collection that most resembles an actual book is *Come on in!* from the Junior League of Jackson. It was professionally produced in-state with unusually decent ring binding, artsy photography, an ISBN, and publication information that actually makes sense. It is the cookbooks quickly slapped together by careless Midwestern publishers that tend to be more aggravating to catalog, owing to their neglect of any and all sensible structure, their overuse of section dividers, and the addition of separately-numbered add-on segments with advice on preserving fruit and diagrams of dismembered livestock. Nonetheless, all community cookbooks pose some type of challenge in cataloging since their origin, which is seldom logical, does not harmonize easily with existing cataloging standards. I just do not think our cataloging lawgivers had these types of publications in mind when they set down the rules for describing books in the English-speaking world. So, sadly, cataloging community cookbooks just is not as quick and easy as the recipes they contain.

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Hans Rasmussen received his MLIS emphasizing archives & records enterprise from the University of Texas at Austin. He has worked at the University of Southern Mississippi as a project archivist for the de Grummond Children's Literature Collection and as a catalog librarian in the Bibliographic Services Department. He currently is special collections cataloger at Louisiana State University.

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# Process and Product: Jump-Starting Archival Cataloging

Chatham Ewing, Digital Initiatives Librarian for Special Collections, The University of Mississippi

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Two years ago, the University of Mississippi Department of Archives and Special Collections hired an archivist charged with moving the department's finding-aids onto the Internet. At that time, the information about our collections on the Internet was less comprehensive than the print information in the reading room. Available on the departmental web-site there were a few finding-aids that indexed important collections, subject-based lists of our holdings (designed to allow our patrons to discover brief summaries of many of our most important collections), and general departmental information. Additionally, there were several online exhibits.

The department had good information describing most of our holdings. Researchers were able to consult a variety of finding-aids, subject guides, and a subject index to our collections. But the information was in print form and therefore only available to readers who visited the archives in person. Researchers with substantial projects, unless assisted by a local researcher, had to request a print version of our finding-aids before coming to our reading room to work with our collections.

It was clear that our Internet resources as they stood at that time were useful to our patrons, and our patrons indicated that they were pleased by the efforts the department had made in the area of digital information on the Internet; however, our patrons were also making us aware that they wanted to have even more and better descriptions and even more and better digital objects available online. Of course, our patrons, driven by their passion for the research areas our archive supports, are no more demanding than patrons anywhere else. Their requests were not unreasonable given their experiences at other archives.

Our patron's demands encouraged us to consider what to do - and the department discussed this at several staff meetings. After our initial internal discussions, it was clear that the department had three essential concerns: We wanted to ensure that we disseminated good quality collection level information, that our good quality information was found and used by our patrons, and that we accomplished goals one and two in a timely fashion.

The department developed a plan where we took stock of where we were, defined our concerns, considered approaches adopted by other institutions, surveyed the literature written about these issues, developed a strategy for moving forward, and implemented the strategy. What follows will be an outline and discussion of the above six steps taken to reach our goal of good information widely and swiftly disseminated. Though at times we felt as if we were trudging up the Ogre's mountain in the old Irish fairy tale, taking two steps forward and three steps back, after a few false starts and missteps, we feel we have managed to improve our patron's chance of locating information about our holdings, and we feel that once they've located the information it will be good quality information.

## **Taking Stock and Defining Our Concerns**

When we took stock, we found that we were both further ahead and further behind with our collection level information than we thought we were. We had many thorough print finding-aids for our materials, and in many cases these same finding-aids were already in digital form as Microsoft

Word documents. These finding-aids were often quite detailed, even including item level descriptions, particularly in the case of heavily researched and important collections. This was good. We were hopeful that we might be able to easily move our finding-aids from MSWord to a more acceptable form of digital document for online presentation, in spite of the potential pitfalls. <sup>1</sup>

However, though we did have digital versions of our finding-aids, and most of these finding-aids served admirably as internal and reading-room reference tools, when we reviewed them we had concerns about presenting them directly on the Internet. As many in the archival community know, legacy finding-aids tend to vary greatly in form and presentation - ours were no exception. This is a problem endemic to converting legacy finding-aids. It certainly is not sensible to expect that finding-aids produced before the American archival community had settled on either a data-content or a data-transfer standard for archival description would conform to any standards.

Finding-aids created before Henson's 1989 Archives Personal Papers, and Manuscripts (APPM) might have clear descriptions that nevertheless appear today to be significantly non-standard in content. Further, APPM was a standard designed with the old MARC-AMC record type in mind (a record type eliminated by format integration). Luckily, before 2005 the University of Mississippi (along with most archives in the United States) did not create online records for its archival collections using MARC records - so we would have no concerns about legacy MARC records. It is also true that while the first edition of International Standard Archival Description, Revision G (ISAD-G) came out in 1994, it was not adopted here at the University (though that was the case with most U.S. archives at that time). Finally, the first edition of Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACS), the first broadly adopted content standard for description in the U.S., came out quite recently, in 2004. Frankly, it is only within the last few years that U.S. archivists have settled on what they believe a finding-aid's content should look like.

Additionally, when we started our project in 2005, EAD was still only six years old and had been only recently established as a transfer standard for finding-aids. Where MARC had been around for many decades as an acceptable record structure for managing and transferring bibliographical information about books from catalog to catalog, it was not until the 1999 publication of Encoded Archival Description Application Guidelines : Version 1.0, that a widely available standard record structure for finding-aid documents used in data exchange became available. Finally, at that time (and even now) there is no complete standard turn-key system offered as a product by any vendor for loading and managing these kinds of EAD records.

In short, because the standards have developed so recently, the majority of the documents describing our collections understandably showed a disparity from current standards for content and data-transfer structure. We had the happy opportunity to implement the new content standard on our post-2005 finding-aids, develop a plan for what to do with our legacy finding-aids, and implement our own system for delivery.

If our descriptions were to be shared with other institutions and systems, we needed to address this disparity between some of our legacy information and current professional practices with regard to data creation, management, and sharing. Would we attempt to revise the good older information and normalize it with regard to current standards? Would we revise all of the old guides completely, even to the item level? Of course, we also wanted to get information about our collections, even if it only offered the barest minimum of data elements, into the hands of our patrons in a timely fashion

Additionally, while there was a significant subset of more recent finding-aids in which we felt the information was good and in which we only would have to address some questions of data content and data structure, there was another subset of collection descriptions, including mostly those that

were some years old, that were going to need revision in order to synchronize the current state of the collection with the current state of the description. For some of the collections there had been further accessions, for some there had been some rearrangement in the past that resulted in multiple descriptions, and for some there were simply disparities between the arrangement of the physical objects and the description that needed resolution. Updating descriptions meant that we would be doing systematic sampling and retrospective conversion on those collections that failed our sampling test and therefore had finding-aids about which we had concerns. That was going to take staff-time and other resources, and there was no way to avoid doing it.

## **Surveying the Literature**

Thankfully, relevant developments had occurred in the archival world just previous to our beginning this project, and these developments contributed to the department's thinking on these issues. First, the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) had its "Exposing Hidden Collections" conference in 2003, the report of which indicated that directors should seek to have their Special Collections and Archives get a basic collection level record for every collection, even minimally processed collections, available on the Internet.<sup>2</sup> There was the argument that less robust records might result in greater access for more collections, and the leading voices in this argument were Dennis Meissner and Mark A. Greene.<sup>3</sup>

At that time, a survey of the state of research in archival informatics included some significant focus on how patrons of archives discover information about our holdings. There had been research on the impact of search engines on discovery done by Helen Tibbo.<sup>4</sup> In addition, Daniel Pitti and Wendy Duff had edited a compilation of work on EAD.<sup>5</sup>

When we correlated the minimal information we found about archives-specific research with then-contemporary research on the information seeking patterns adopted by general library patrons, certain important axioms for our project became clear. Research indicated that:

- \* Patrons tend to use Internet search engines first, just as they begin to search for information.
- \* While they may begin with search engines, patrons have a variety of additional information seeking patterns. Since they will seek for information in a variety of different ways, we will have to consider how to deliver it in a variety of ways.
- \* Advanced users of archives tended to be more senior scholars and still tended to make extensive use of library catalogs, particularly the large union catalogs. Either the patrons used these tools themselves or archivists used these tools to help patrons.

## **Other Institutional Practices**

Our review of other institution's practices with regard to MARC cataloging and EAD descriptions included a look at the New York Public Library, Washington University in St. Louis, and The University of Illinois. At the time, NYPL was creating collection level records in RLIN and its own OPAC and delivering EAD finding-aids using a Dynatext/Dynaweb. NYPL was using a very powerful system for managing SGML and XML that was no longer commercially available and would not be affordable for us if it were. The University of Illinois used a database backend to assist with the delivery collection level information linked to EAD finding-aids. Washington University in St. Louis, like many universities then and now, was using a strategy that involved cataloging

collections on OCLC and creating EAD finding-aids for web delivery off of the library web-site and through what was to become ArchivesGrid.

## **Developing a Strategy**

While several other possibilities have opened up in the interim, our analysis at the time of potential avenues for discovery of our collections included the following:

1. Internet Search Engines and Indexes (Google, DMOZ, etc.)
2. The University of Mississippi OPAC
3. Regional Catalogs (Kudzu)
4. National and International Catalogs (OCLC's WorldCat, RLIN, NUCMC)
5. Finding-Aid Aggregations (ArchiveGrid, ArchivesUSA,)
6. Authoritative Web-Sites (VoS, Academic Subject Guides, etc.)

A strategy that would blanket as many possible resources and points of access would make our collections most likely to be discovered by potential patrons, and hence the broad nature of potential resources for discovery. While the number of options initially seemed unworkable, some further thinking about this clarified and simplified our approach.

On our list above, we had several MARC based information resources (2, 3, & 4). As with most institutions, our database management department created bibliographic records for print materials on OCLC and downloaded them into our local OPAC. If we could find a way to duplicate this process for records about our archival collections, this would mean that our local OPAC and OCLC could be considered vehicles for essentially the same information. Our regional catalog aggregated information from our and other member's local OPACS using Z39.50. Again, we reasoned that if we could somehow get archival collection level records into OCLC, this MARC -based information would also be re-used through Z39.50 in our regional catalog.

On our list above we also had resources amenable for presentation through using EAD (1, 5, 6). When we posted our EAD based finding-aids on our web-site, search engines such as Google and Yahoo! would discover them. When authoritative resources such as Archives USA, open indexes such as DMOZ, or other online resources like Wikipedia pointed at our web-site, they would be indexing an EAD-based document for the information seeker.

After analyzing how we thought our patrons might be most likely to discover information about our collections, the department came to the conclusion that we initially needed to produce two kinds of information to create the best chance of a patron discovering our collections - an EAD finding-aid and a MARC record on OCLC and/or RLIN. If we could successfully convert from one record format to another, we might only need to create one kind of information. After this first step, we would have to comb through various general purpose indices (such as DMOZ), subject specific indices (such as the online Congressional directory), and general reference sources (Wikipedia) in order to create links to our materials.

## **Implementing our Strategy**

We felt that our initial step in our plan should be to improve the number and richness of our finding-aids on the Internet. This presented us with some problems - with regard to delivering finding-aids to our patrons, we didn't have the funding to obtain the programmers to implement the kind of database back-ends they had at NYPL and at Illinois; however, even with the potential pitfalls of open source software, we might have considered that route now if either Archon and Archivist's toolkit had been more robustly developed than they were then. Given that, we thought at the time

that it would be easiest to present finding-aids online using HTML generated by modified XSLT scripts derived from Michael Fox's EAD Cookbook.

We ran some initial experiments using III's ("Triple I") Meta-Data Builder, but we found that the hoped for accessibility offered by incorporating the finding-aid as a digital objects into the III package didn't pan out. Our finding-aids took an inordinate amount of time to load through the III product, and this caused some consternation amongst our staff. We were unsure as to whether the slow loads of the finding-aids were due to the nature of the database delivering the finding-aid or due to the large amount of conditional logic in our stylesheet. Eventually we punted, declared it a little bit of both, and, not without a bit of sadness at letting such a promising tool go by the wayside, decided not to use the III product as a delivery mechanism. Instead, we would pre-process our finding-aids into static XHTML files and place them in a directory on our web-server.

This choice to use XHTML was also a result of our initial literature survey. The literature made it obvious that an initial goal should be getting collection-level records describing our holdings up on the Internet where they would be exposed to Internet search-engines. A subsequent goal would be getting collection level records into OCLC and RLIN. A limiting factor for this plan was the state of the descriptions of our collections - it was clear that we had two kinds of collection descriptions.

The first were complete, accurate, and modern - this group consisted of about 70 collections and was augmented through descriptions prepared with the assistance of the University of Southern Mississippi's statewide Civil Rights project. This first group would be the easiest to pull into EAD finding-aids and collection level records. These were the collections that we would use to initially establish our footprint on the Internet (and subsequently on RLIN and WorldCat).

The second included descriptions that were older, many of which were high-level box and folder listings lacking all but the most basic information about collections. This is the group that was going to take some research and retrospective conversion. We simply did not have the resources within the department to do the labor intensive work to produce detailed descriptions of every level of every collection that didn't have it already. The department came to the conclusion that a feasible process would produce "stub" records of all collections using minimal EAD finding-aids, place these records in a searchable directory on our web-site, and pursue collection-level records in WorldCat and RLIN for large, heavily used, and well-described collections.

This would be a good initial step toward meeting the Hidden Collections guidelines. Our initial "stub" records would contain minimal collection level information, including the following information:

- \* Title
- \* Language of Materials
- \* Extent of Materials
- \* Unique Identifying Number
- \* Physical Location
- \* Repository Information
- \* Citation Information
- \* Use Restrictions.

As soon as we could we would add:

- \* Creators
- \* Inclusive Dates

- \* Abstract and/or Scope Notes
- \* Biographical/Historical Notes.

While these elements are far from a complete archival description, they give enough of the basics about a collection to allow a researcher to assess whether the collection might meet her research needs.

Our first step in this process included working with the Mississippi Digital Libraries Civil Rights project to convert some of our existing finding-aids from Word documents to EAD finding-aids, and beginning to present some EAD tagged finding-aids on our own web-site as HTML files generated through the use of XSLT. Needless to say, this amount of conversion and retrospective conversion required and continues to require a good deal of effort and expertise, and our staff has been heavily committed in the area of retrospective conversion.

As mentioned above, we had initially hoped to use our stub EAD finding-aids to generate collection level information to be placed into the largest of the bibliographic databases (RLIN and WorldCat). Our overly optimistic thinking on how to do this was inspired by a remark by Michael Fox, made at an SAA meeting several years ago, about using MARC records as the foundation for all the EAD finding-aids at the Minnesota Historical Society. Since we had finding-aids and no MARC records, what would happen if we could go the other way - using a finding-aid as the basis for a MARC record? With Terry Reese's MarcEdit in mind, we had the initial notion that we were going to pull collection-level records from our finding-aids into MARC, and then upload those as a batch into WorldCat. While this process was technically feasible, and potentially efficient, we were unable to resolve our workflow for doing this plan in workable fashion, and so it was abandoned.

The difficulty we had with converting our finding-aids directly into MARC, and our lack of experience with collection level MARC records, eventually led us to conclude that we might better seek expertise and training for creating proper collection level MARC records outside of our library. The first place that we contacted after coming to this conclusion was the Library of Congress' National Union Catalog of Manuscript Materials (NUCMC) office.

The NUCMC program began publishing a comprehensive index to archival and manuscript holdings in the United States in 1959. This published version covered archival collections registered through NUCMC dating from 1959-1993. Numerous library subject pages describe the resource as a tool for accessing information about national archival collections. In 1986, well after the first wave of library automation discussed by Kilgour<sup>6</sup>, the NUCMC office began a program to help catalog the holdings of repositories that did not have the resources to get collection-level records cataloged on RLIN and WorldCat.<sup>6</sup> By 1993 the print version of the catalog was no longer produced, and archivists, somewhat behind the general library digitization curve, had moved the NUCMC program entirely into the digital realm. Harriet Ostroff and Claire Gabriel discuss this history.<sup>7,8</sup>

At the moment the NUCMC catalog operates much as it has for many years - it is an Internet gateway that uses a simple search interface on aggregated collection level records prepared by the program. It is a window into a subset of archival records now held in WorldCat. Somewhat more recently, Chaydwyk-Healey has incorporated the entries in the old print NUCMC into its ArchivesUSA digital product - retrospectively digitizing the old volumes and creating a powerful new tool for access. Of course their program, which also includes NIDS records, is a commercial product which charges subscription fees.

The administrators of the current NUCMC program found merit in our appeal for assistance. They



agreed with our proposition that because our archive did not have staff experienced in the preparation of collection-level records, and our general library cataloging department was overburdened with work, we would need the help of the NUCMC program in order to create proper access to our collections.

After NUCMC gave us the green light, we submitted information about our collections (drawn from our finding-aids, administrative files, and the collections themselves) into their online forms on the NUCMC site at the Library of Congress. They then used our information to create MARC records. After the records were created, NUCMC sent us the records for review. At times there was a correction, though not often, and soon after our approval, the record was finalized for the NUCMC catalog.

As a result, during the last several months we at the University of Mississippi have used those online forms to participate in the NUCMC program. During the course of several months we have been part of the program, the pace has averaged out to about a record a week. Different factors influence how long producing a particular record might take. At times records were easily produced because we had complete information, and at times we needed to do some information gathering within the collections and within information resources in order to assist the NUCMC catalogers. We have communicated regularly with the catalogers at NUCMC over the phone and through e-mail.

Our interaction with NUCMC has proved to be tremendously helpful for us. Because of NUCMC, we have been able to get high quality collection-level records created and have added collections to the largest of the library union catalogs, RLIN and WorldCat (though now only WorldCat, as OCLC has finally swallowed RLG and the two catalogs have been integrated). This has helped us further our strategy of getting high-quality information about our archival and manuscript collections pushed out in a variety of media. Further, NUCMC has often provided additional resources for doing authority and subject cataloging that we have then been able to re-introduce into finding-aids.

We currently have plans to work with NUCMC on the cataloging of many more of our collections, and hope to be presenting better and more information about our collections on WorldCat, our web-site, and on linked web-sites in the future.

## **Assessment and Conclusions**

The recent data-conversion work at the University of Mississippi has greatly increased the amount of information about collections now available both on the Internet and in library databases. We have already had many patrons discover our collections through our newer Internet finding-aids, and our hope is that continuing to post stub and full finding-aids and participation in NUCMC will continue to improve our patron's experience of our collections. They get better information and more of it. Not only is finding-aid use easier to track, but reference work (both in our reading room and with correspondents) can be more efficient and exact.

While the conversion and presentation of our existing information may take us another year or so, some subsequent projects for this data (and our digital collections in general) will involve developing answers to the following questions:

- \* How our collections data can be used for cross-linking resources on the Internet?
- \* Which authoritative resources we should link to, and how should we manage those links?

- \* Will something like a URN be necessary for our finding-aids?
  - \* How should we integrate/link our finding-aids with our online digital projects?
  - \* How we can develop more efficient processes for creating our metadata?
  - \* How we can make our online resources more interactive and patron friendly?
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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Meissner, Dennis. "First Things First: Re-engineering Finding Aids for Implementation of EAD," *American Archivist* 60.4 (1997).

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<sup>2</sup> Exposing Hidden Collections: 2003 Conference

Summary [http://www.arl.org/rtl/speccoll/hidden/EHC\\_conference\\_summary.shtml](http://www.arl.org/rtl/speccoll/hidden/EHC_conference_summary.shtml)

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<sup>3</sup> Greene, Mark A. and Dennis Meissner. "More Product, Less Process: Revamping Traditional Archival Processing," *American Archivist* 68.2 (2005).

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<sup>4</sup> Tibbo, H. R., et. al. "Finding finding aids on the World Wide Web," *The American Archivist* v. 64 no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2001) p. 61-77.

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<sup>5</sup> Pitti, Daniel and Duff, Wendy. *Encoded Archival Description on the Internet*. Haworth Information Press, 2001.

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<sup>6</sup> Kilgour, Frederick G. "History of Library Computerization," *Journal of Library Automation* 3.3 (1970).

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<sup>7</sup> Ostroff, H.. "Subject access to archival and manuscript materials." *American Archivist*. 53. (1990) p. 100-105.

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<sup>8</sup> Gabriel, Claire. "Subject Access to Archives and Manuscript Collections: An Historical Overview," *Journal of Archival Organization*, Vol. 1 Issue 4 (2002) p 53-63.

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