Libraries and archives : sharing standards to facilitate access to cultural heritage

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This presentation shares the French experience of collaboration between archivists and librarians, led by working groups with the Association française de normalisation (AFNOR).

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Summary

With the arrival of the Web, the various heritage institutions are increasingly aware of their areas of commonality and the need for interoperability between their catalogues. This is particularly true for archives and libraries, which have developed standards for meeting their specific needs Regarding document description, but which are now seeking to establish a dialogue for defining a coherent set of standards to which professionals in both communities can refer.

After discussing the characteristics of the collections held respectively in archives and libraries, this presentation will draw a portrait of the standards established by the two professional communities in the following areas:
> *- description of documents*
> *- access points in descriptions and authority records*
> *- description of functions*
> *- identification of conservation institutions and collections*

It is concluded from this study that the standards developed by libraries on the one hand and by archives on the other are most often complementary and that each professional community is being driven to use the standards developed by the other, or would at least profit from doing so.

A dialogue between the two professions is seen today as a necessity for fostering the compatibility and interoperability of standards and documentary tools. Despite this recognition of the need for collaboration, the development of standards is still largely a compartmentalized process, and the fact that normative work is conducted within professional associations is a contributing factor. The French experience shows, however, that it is possible to create working groups where archivists and librarians unite and develop a comprehensive view of the standards and initiatives conducted by each, with the goal of articulating them as best they can for the purpose of interoperability, yet respecting the specific requirements of each.

Introduction

Libraries and archives have long existed as two separate universes living side by side, with no genuine dialogue or cooperation. This compartmentalization is tending to break down today and areas of commonality are being recognized among institutions and the professions. In this regard, Canada is leading the way, having transformed its National Library and its National Archives into one and the same institution in 2004 – Library and Archives Canada.

The description and access to collections where complementary approaches of archives and libraries are increasingly acknowledged thereby gaining a firmer footing to better serve users in both communities. In this presentation, we will examine to what extent libraries and archives share common standards and how this cooperation can be strengthened while respecting the specific nature of each of the professions.

Common interests shared by the two professions

Regarding the nature of collections, archives and libraries have the shared responsibility of preserving and highlighting a written and audiovisual heritage. This heritage is basically comprised of documents produced by administrations and other institutions in carrying out their functions, in the case of archives, and by published and collected documents, in the case of libraries. National archival holdings are thus dependent on acquisitions from administrations, whereas legal deposit is essential for building national library collections. Nonetheless, libraries also preserve manuscript collections and private archival holdings (writers' or professors' papers, associations' or publishers' holdings, etc.), which are also largely present in archival institutions and subject to rules of archival description. In addition, archives often house libraries and the description of their collections is completely in line with ISBD[1]. As a result, there is no strict compartmentalization of collections, but occasional sharing.

Libraries and archives further share the concern of broadly making their resources known and enabling access to them, even through joint resource discovery. In many cases, the resources held in archives and in libraries are complementary for researchers interested in an institution or a personality, to the extent that the former (archives) reflect their activity and clarify the context over time and the latter (libraries) bring together the publications that are the fruit of this activity or document it from various angles.

The digital library initiatives that are multiplying today clearly reflect an awareness that the various heritage institutions complement one another by bringing together the collections of libraries, archives and museums: A case in point is the *Online Archive of California* (OAC)[2] in the United States and *Europeana*[3] in Europe, to name just two examples. These initiatives, which enable digitized forms of documents to be accessed directly, are still dependent nonetheless on online descriptions of these documents. The interoperability of descriptions, and more particularly the harmonization of access points, are proving today to be major challenges.

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[1] ISBD = International Standard Bibliographic Description
[2] http://www.oac.cdlib.org/
[3] http://www.europeana.eu/

The availability on the Internet of research tools like library catalogues and archival inventories, along with the desire to facilitate research for users, is therefore driving libraries and archives to institute a dialogue for exploring their respective practices and streamlining them, whenever possible.

Two complementary standardization approaches

The standardization of description rules and access points is a reality for archives today, just as it has been for some time now in the case of libraries.

The very nature of the documents making up the core of their collections brought libraries to realize early on that benefits were to be had from an international standard bibliographic description: they are, in fact, *published* documents, produced in large quantities of *identical* copies that can be found in many institutions; in addition, each edition may be given a *separate* bibliographic description that may be reproduced across catalogues. The interest in being able to exchange bibliographic information led to the definition of the Universal Bibliographic Control (UBC) program by IFLA, and thus the definition of standards for bibliographic descriptions (with ISBD) and access points in the early 1970s.

The movement was slower in archives in that their collections are comprised of series of documents that are unique by nature, classified according to their logic of production, which implies a hierarchical description placing each document in its context. As a result, the possibility of sharing descriptive work was not the driver for standard descriptions in the case of archives, but rather a consistent approach with respect to finding aids at a time when the technical means made their international dissemination possible via the Internet.

The *Statement of Principles Regarding Archival Description*, adopted at the International Congress on Archives in Montreal in 1992, identified the purposes of archival descriptive standards as follows:
> - to ensure the creation of consistent, appropriate, and self-explanatory descriptions;
> - to facilitate the retrieval and exchange of information about archival material;
> - to enable the sharing of authority data; and
> - to make possible the integration of descriptions from different locations into a unified information system.

Born directly from these principles, the first edition of ISAD(G)[4] dates back to 1994, followed by a second edition in 1999. Since then, archives have not let up on their efforts toward standardization and have developed a coherent set of international standards covering the various aspects of archival holdings: besides ISAD(G) for archival description, ISAAR(CPF)[5] for authority records on creators of archival holdings (1st edition in 1996), ISDF[6] for describing functions and administrative activities (1st edition in 2007), and ISDIAH[7] for describing institutions with archival holdings (1st edition in 2008), this latter

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[4] ISAD(G) = General International Standard Archival Description
[5] ISAAR (CPF) = International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons and Families
[6] ISDF = International Standard for Describing Functions
[7] ISDIAH = International Standard for Describing Institutions with Archival Holdings

standard having been designed as an extension of the ISAAR(CPF) standard and developed consistently with it[8].

Description of documents

Regarding the description of documents, the standards developed by the two professions reflect the characteristics of the collections held by each: ISBD is perfectly suited to published documents, described at the unit level, with numerous copies present in various institutions; on the other hand, ISAD(G) is intended to situate documents, generally unique, in the context of their production. Automation and the Internet, however, have given rise to shared interests.

MARC formats, used in the library community, are well suited to the bibliographic description where a separate description is created for each document, with few hierarchical relationships (basically, a link to a published collection or a monograph series); however, it does not satisfactorily support extremely hierarchical holdings that are characteristic of the archival description. MARC21 has fields for describing archival holdings and manuscripts, but it is at odds with the absence of hierarchical depth in MARC formats: the automated description of holdings is limited to the higher level of the description, as the lower levels of the hierarchy cannot be described in MARC format.

The EAD DTD[9] (*Encoded Archival Description*), defined by the archival community, supports automation and remote access to detailed and hierarchical descriptions of holdings based on ISAD(G) principles. Owing to the limitations of MARC formats, EAD quickly attracted the interest of libraries for describing their archival or manuscript holdings. It is not uncommon today for libraries to offer EAD inventories beside their MARC catalogue, or an EAD "catalogue" with cross-searches in various published inventories. In France, examples include the *Calames*[10] (Catalogue en ligne des archives et des manuscrits de l'enseignement supérieur) developed by the Agence bibliographique de l'enseignement supérieur (ABES) and *BnF archives et manuscrits*[11] which groups together the Bibliothèque nationale de France EAD inventories.

Use of the EAD by libraries made them aware of the standard to which the EAD refers, ISAD(G), and to review the rules for describing manuscripts and archival holdings in light of the principles and elements set forth in ISAD(G). In this way, DACS (*Describing Archives: a Content Standard*) replaced APPM (*Archives, Personal Papers and Manuscripts*) in the United States. In France, a working group comprised of librarians and archivists is working on developing a standard for describing modern and contemporary manuscripts, with DACS and ISAD(G) as reference documents.

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[8] ISDIAH, 1.5: "As corporate bodies, persons or families, the holders of archival materials may be described in ISAAR(CPF) compliant authority records including the appropriate elements of description as indicated in ISDIAH."
[9] http://www.loc.gov/ead/
[10] http://www.calames.abes.fr/
[11] http://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/pl/

Access points in descriptions

Even more than bibliographic or archival description, whose rules meet specific needs, access points and their control by authority records constitute the area where collaboration between libraries and archives can be successfully pursued for promoting interoperability.

From this perspective as well, libraries developed rules sooner than archives. As early as 1961, the *Paris Principles* defined internationally the choice of access points for the bibliographic description. On the basis of these principles, standards on the form and structure of headings were subsequently developed – internationally by IFLA for innovative concepts such as corporate bodies, and nationally for physical persons or titles for which practices had already been established.

Developed by librarians, standards on the form and structure of headings today have a broader area of application than library catalogues; they were adopted by archivists for creating standard access points to creators in the archival description[12] and in authority records describing archive creators[13]. In this regard, ISAAR(CPF) cites the IFLA recommendation on the *Form and Structure of Corporate Headings* in its normative bibliography, and DACS refers to AACR2 for establishing the authorized form of the creator's name.

Libraries and archives both create authority records. Although libraries have a long history in this area, they have never adopted a normative document internationally for defining the content of an authority record: GARE[14], and then GARR[15] makes recommendations on the display of authority records; as for MLAR[16], it defines the minimum content of an authority record for interchange purposes, but it does not provide a more detailed description of the elements comprising an authority record. They are have, in fact, formalized the content of library authority records: today, the two international interchange formats, MARC21/A and UNIMARC/A, have a common content based on GARR, but they provide different solutions to managing different forms of an entity's name. UNIMARC/A distinguishes the authorized form, parallel forms and rejected forms, while MARC21/A manages only the authorized form and rejected forms.

Archives adopted a complementary process by developing a standard on the content of an authority record, ISAAR(CPF), and referred to the standards developed by libraries on the form and structure of headings to establish the authorized form for the name of entities. A revision of the ISAAR(CPF) standard benefited from libraries' experience regarding the control of access points by authority records: French comments on the draft 2nd edition were prepared through a collaborative effort by archivists and librarians, and the second edition (2004) of the ISAAR(CPF) standard strives to define the common points between archival

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[12] ISAD(G), element 3.2.1 Name of creator(s): "The name should be given in the standardized form as prescribed by international or national conventions in accordance with the principles of ISAAR(CPF)."
[13] ISAAR(CPF), element 5.1.2 Authorized form(s) of name: "Record the standardized form of name for the entity being described in accordance with any relevant national or international conventions or rules applied by the agency that created the authority record. … Specify separately in the Rules and/or conventions element (5.4.3) which set of rules has been applied for this element."
[14] GARE = Guidelines for Authority and Reference Entries
[15] GARR = Guidelines for Authority Records and References
[16] Common designation for the document entitled *Mandatory Data Elements for Internationally Shared Resource Authority Records*

and library authority records (both serve to control access points)[17], while reflecting the individual characteristics of archival authority records (which must go beyond simply controlling access points and contain more information to clarify the context of production for the documents being described)[18]. One further difference regarding the use of authority records by the two professions: archival practice is to limit the creation of authority records to creators of archival holdings (the ISAAR(CPF) standard only covers corporate bodies, persons and families), whereas libraries create authority records to control all standardized access points, including title headings and subject headings.

Owing to the complementary nature of standards, work on authority records would appear, at first glance, to be an area particularly conducive to cooperation between professionals in the two fields to further interoperability. The concern for dialogue and interoperability, already acknowledged in 2004, is present in the work currently underway internationally on authority records: modelling authority data within the framework of IFLA on the one hand, and defining a schema for authority data with EAC[19] (Encoded Archival Context), which is based on the ISAAR(CPF) standard of the International Council on Archives.

During an international review of the FRAD (*Functional Requirements for Authority Data*) model, the National Library of Australia urged the IFLA working group to take a close look at EAC and be inspired by the EAC approach for analyzing and defining data elements. The French comments, for their part, drew attention to the analysis conducted by EAC to deal with the attributes common to several entities. In addition, the National Library of Australia insisted on the benefit that the two projects would derive from dialogue and collaboration, with EAC having everything to gain by referring to a conceptual model.

This desire for openness is also demonstrated by EAC. The international working group that was recently set up to carry EAC forward includes archivists and librarians. An enquiry into the use of EAC, which was a precursor to the actual work, showed that EAC is used by libraries: for example, it is the format selected by the National Library of Australia for *People Australia*[20]. The work has just begun, but the main focus that has been identified is the respect of archival reference standards, compatibility and coherence with EAD and interoperability with other encoding schemas used in related areas, by using, for example, the namespaces technique to call upon other more specialized references and metadata schemas when needed.

Description of functions

Among the standards recently developed by the International Council on Archives, libraries may find interest in the ISDF standard on describing functions and administrative activities.

This standard responds to a specific need of archives, namely, archival materials are produced through the the performance of functions and administrative activities, so describing them serves to clarify the context in which the archival materials were produced and to provide a

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[17] ISAAR(CPF), 1.8: "Archival authority records are similar to library authority records in as much as both forms of authority record need to support the creation of standardized access points in descriptions."

[18] ISAAR(CPF), 1.9: "Archival authority records, however, need to support a much wider set of requirements than is the case with library authority records. These additional requirements are associated with the importance of documenting information about records creators and the context of records creation in archival description systems. As such, archival authority records go much further rand usually will contain much more information than library authority records."

[19] http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/eac/

[20] http://www.nla.gov.au/initiatives/peopleaustralia/

better understanding as to how they were produced and used, thereby constituting an important element for evaluating, classifying and describing archives. Furthermore, functions are recognized as being more stable than administrative structures, which are subject to reorganization: one and the same administrative function may be transferred during the course of a reorganization and be performed successively by several bodies.

With this standard, a model for archival information comes together, identifying three entities corresponding to archival materials, creators and functions and based on the articulation of three standards: ISAD(G), ISAAR(CPF) and ISDF. Corporate bodies, persons or families perform functions and produce or manage documents in the performance of these functions. The functions are reflected by documents, which is manifested upon classification by the organization of these documents into organic series and sub-series.

Administrative functions, as defined by archivists, have nothing in common with the "relator codes[21]" used by librarians for expressing the relationship between a person, corporate body or family and a resource that it created or contributed to. With EAD and EAC, the only relationship being considered at the moment between a description of archival materials and an archival authority record is that of "creator."

Nonetheless, the descriptions of functions and activities created by archivists may be interesting for library authority files: authority records describing corporate bodies, particularly public bodies, would stand to be enriched by links to descriptions of the functions and administrative activities they perform or have performed. This would serve to characterize their activity and thus satisfy a need for users of authority files. The INTERMARC/A format used at the Bibliothèque nationale de France provides this type of information in a summary manner, in the form of coded information, and experience has shown that it is useful information of interest to clients of BnF authority records as a selection criterion.

International standard identifiers

The identification of institutions and their holdings is another area where the use of common standards would be beneficial for promoting interchange between the two professions. The use of common references among the various types of heritage institutions is even becoming a necessity in this day and age of digital library projects or portals combining libraries, archives and museums.

Here once again, libraries felt the need for identifiers earlier on than archives and they developed the standards they needed for their collective catalogues. ISO standard 15511: *International Standard Identifier for Libraries and Related Organizations (ISIL)* is the result of this process on the international scene. As its name says so well, it was first developed by and for libraries and then expanded its area of application to other cultural institutions, although not in true consultation with them. There is a strong risk of ending up with a situation that lacks consistency, as is the case in France where the Répertoire des centres de ressources (RCR), managed by the Agence bibliographique de l'enseignement supérieur (ABES), which is the national agency for ISIL, includes libraries for the most part, but a few museums and archives as well, while parallel identification systems have been defined by archives on the one hand and museums on the other for their own individual needs.

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[21] "Codes de function" in French

ISIL is also an essential element of the project for developing a standard on an International Standard Collection Identifier (ISCI), since it is destined to be the first segment of ISCI preceding the identifier attributed to the collection by the institution designated by ISIL.

In their reflection on describing institutions with archival holdings, which ended in 2008 with the ISDIAH standard, archivists became aware of the importance of identifying archives in order to promote collaboration and interchange. They identified three ISO standards or draft standards as possibly satisfying this need: ISIL and ISCI to be sure, but the draft standard ISNI (International Standard Name Identifier) as well, whose purpose is to identify persons or corporate bodies involved in the various stages of the life of intellectual products, from their creation to the management of rights related to their use. They should therefore be showing a greater interest in the development and implementation of these standards which they intend to use.

Although they have an international standard identifier with ISIL, libraries have not, however, defined an international standard description for the institutions they are identifying – something archives did with ISDIAH. In this day and age of the Internet, it is important to provide users of online catalogues with information on the institutions where they can consult documents described or order reproductions of them. It would be a service to Internet users to present consistent descriptions from one country to another, beyond the borders of the professions and institutions. Libraries would benefit from taking a closer look at the ISDIAH standard as a potential schema for providing metadata associated with the ISIL identifier. Such metadata could apply to libraries as well as archives.

Strengthening collaboration for developing standards

Whether describing documents or access points in these descriptions and authority records, or identifying conservation institutions, the work conducted by libraries on the one hand and by archives on the other is complementary more than it is competitive. It would be appropriate to strengthen this complementarity by means of dialogue and consultation when developing standards, which is not the case at the present time, on the international scene at least.

The processes for developing standards are similar between the two professions. Normative work in the areas of activity specific to each profession is being conducted within international professional organizations – IFLA for libraries and the International Council on Archives (ICA) for archives. The standards for describing documents are the responsibility of the Division of Bibliographic Control and more particularly the Cataloguing Section within IFLA, and the Committee of Best Practices and Standards within ICA. But although standardization authorities are clearly identified on each side, the sad truth is that there is no interchange between the two organizations internationally and the standards are developed in parallell and not together.

This compartmentalization can also be found in the standards developed within the ISO Technical Committee TC46 "Information and Documentation," whose vocation, however, is to represent all sectors of documentation, beyond professional borders. Although archivists are present on TC46, they are dedicated essentially to the work of subcommittee SC11 "Archives/records management," which concerns them directly. They are not represented in the working group on ISCI, just as they did not participate toward developing the ISIL standard. It is to be hoped, however, that this situation will change with the interest that the

ICA Committee of Best Practices and Standards is showing today for these two standards, in relation to the work it is conducting around the description and identification of institutions with archival holdings.

Areas of collaboration do exist, however. For example, the international working group on the evolution of EAC brings together archivists and librarians, illustrating the willingness that is seen today for dialogue and exchange between the two communities.

Dialogue and collaboration can also be put in place on a national level. The very specific situation of the standardization of cataloguing in France, which is not performed within professional associations but within the framework of the national standardization agency, AFNOR (Association française de normalisation), has proved to be an asset in that joint working groups could be put in place around the EAD DTD and its use in French archives and libraries, authority data or the description of modern and contemporary manuscripts.

While working on the French translation of the *EAD Tag Library* and producing an EAD application guide in France, the working group on the EAD DTD[22] proposed changes to the DTD to reflect the needs expressed by libraries for describing manuscripts, such as the necessity for being able to indicate incipits upon encoding.

As for the working group on authority data[23] it is closely following the work related to authority records being conducted by the two professional communities: It prepared the French comments on the revision of the ISAAR(CPF) standard, on the FRAD model, and it is actively involved today in the work on changes to the EAC. It has thus acquired a comprehensive view of the work being conducted in the area of authorities, thereby enabling it to identify areas of commonality and suggest gateways between approaches to attain greater interoperability.

Conclusion

It was in order to improve access to their holdings that first libraries and then archives developed descriptive standards. Today, the need to highlight these collections over the Internet requires taking new steps to ensure that standards and formats are interoperable; and allow for greater cooperation between cultural institutions, as well as collaboration on joint projects, such as digital library projects involving various institutions.

The two professions have concentrated their standardization efforts on different objects, with different processes, and they have thus developed complementary standards. The complementary nature of bibliographic and archival standards is already an asset from which everyone benefits. But archivists and librarians are now aware of the need to institute a dialogue for reconciling or better articulating their practices toward better serving their users, who are often the same.

It would be beneficial for this dialogue to become commonplace for organizations that develop standard for the two professions and, more specifically, that areas for discussion be introduced and developed between IFLA and ICA, particularly between the IFLA Cataloguing Section and the ICA Committee of Best Practices and Standards.

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[22] AFNOR/CG46/CN357/GE3: Encoded Archival Description (EAD DTD)
[23] AFNOR/CG46/CN357/GE4: Authority data

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