Introductions
Moderators

Gretchen Gueguen  
Data Services Coordinator  
Digital Public Library of America

Ann Hanlon  
Head, Digital Collections and Initiatives and DH Lab  
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries
Set-up
Panel

● Liz Gushee, Head of Digital Collections Services at the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin

● Jennifer Roper, Senior Director for Collections Access & Discovery at the University of Virginia

● Marin Lewis, Collections Information Specialist at the Princeton University Art Museum
#dlf2017
#t6c
A Brief History of Library Description

How We Should Learn to Let Go and Embrace the Chaos

Jennifer O’Brien Roper
University of Virginia
RULES
FOR THE COMPILATION OF THE CATALOGUE.

I. Titles to be written on slips, uniform in size.

The entries of works in the collection of George the Third presented by George the Fourth to the Nation to be distinguished by a crown.

II. Titles to be arranged alphabetically, according to the English alphabet only (whatever be the order of the alphabet in which a foreign name might have to be entered in its original language) under the surname of the author, whenever it appears printed in the title, or in any other part of the book. If the name be supplied in MS. the work must nevertheless be considered anonymous or pseudonymous, as the case may be, and the MS. addition deemed merely a suggestion to which the librarian will attach such importance as he may think proper, on his own responsibility, in supplying the author’s name between brackets, as hereafter directed.

In the alphabetical arrangement, initial prepositions, letters or articles to be taken in connection with the rest of the name.

III. If more than one name occur in the title, by which it may appear that the work is the production of more than one person, the first to be taken as the leading name.

IV. The works of sovereigns, or of princes of sovereign houses, to be entered under their Christian or first name, in their English form.

being used in various languages, to be entered under their vernacular form, if any instance occur of such persons having used it in any of their printed publications. With respect to places, the English form to be preferred.

XI. Works of authors who change their name or add to it a second, after having begun to publish under the first, to be entered under the first name, noticing any alteration which may have subsequently taken place.

XII. Foreign names, excepting French, preceded by a preposition, an article, or by both, to be entered under the letter immediately following. French names preceded by a preposition only, to follow the same rule; those preceded by an article, or by a preposition and an article, to be entered under the initial letter of the article. English surnames, of foreign origin, to be entered under their initial, even if originally belonging to a preposition. Foreign compound surnames to be entered under the initial of the first of them. In compound Dutch and English surnames the last name to be preferred, if no entry of a work by the same person occur in the catalogue under the first name only.

XIII. German names, in which the letters ñ, ö or ü occur, to be spelt with the diphthong ae, oe and ue respectively.

XIV. Surnames of noblemen, though not appearing in
An archival perspective...

Liz Gushee
Head, Digital Collections Services
Harry Ransom Center
The Harry Ransom Center - One of the nation’s finest research libraries...but what else?
We are also an archive and museum

- 1 million books
- 100,000 works of art
- 5 million photographs
- 42 million manuscripts
42 million manuscripts wins the day

Content standards:
● DACS, DCRM (MSS), CCO

Authorities:
● LCSH, Getty for names, places & subjects
● EAD structured finding aids

One size does not fit all...
Visual Collections - EAD finding aids fall short

- Visual collections require individual description

- These collections don’t often fit neatly into the general structure of finding aids (Works, Correspondence, Personal & Professional)

- Data, useful to curators, scholars and the general public gets left by the wayside
Center’s public facing DAMS can:

- Add back in “lost” data via Dublin Core
- Present entire digitized archival collections across formats
- Provide linkages between finding aid and digitized colls.
Archives 101: *Respect des Fonds* ~ the basis of archival arrangement and description

- **Provenance** - records of an individual or organization must be represented together; distinguishable from other records.

- **Original Order** - The order of records established by the creator should be maintained by physical and/or intellectual means in order to preserve existing relationships between documents & the evidential value in their order.
Original Order & Born Digital materials

- Hybrid collections - analog & digital
- Processing of bd materials has followed arrangement & description due to backlog
- Archivists incorporate bd desc. into existing finding aids
Original Order & Born Digital materials

Two choices:

- Intellectual integration within relevant series
- Separate series for electronic materials
- Always a tension between original order and usability
Intellectual incorporation for born digital
Archives & Aggregation

Or should it be called “aggravation?”

- **Upside** - objects and their descriptions can be discovered alongside hundreds of thousands of other items

- **Downside** - context and relationships between archival items is lost
Blue Sky

- Systems and/or interfaces that can deliver both digitized and born digital collection materials to our users
- Wide adoption of technology that permits the exchange of images and data across systems
- Readiness of digital collections to support computational use, a la “Library Collections as Data”
- Unrestricted use of collections and data to support reuse
The view from a museum

Marin Lewis
Princeton University Art Museum

Exterior views of the Princeton University Art Museum
Online Collections Catalogue

100,000+ works, including archives

2014: less than 9,000 object records online

2017: over 58,000 object records online
Collections Discovery Initiative (2015-2020)

Cataloging and research

Image and data architecture

Access and discoverability
Museum Descriptive Practice

Standards development
The act of describing objects
The role of the object record
Standards in Museum Cataloging

Museum descriptive practice emphasizes the development of local cataloging guidelines.
Cataloging Cultural Objects (CCO)

A framework for cross-collection discoverability
Other Museum authorities

Compare cataloging practices

Capitalize on unique authorities
Objects are not self-describing

Zapotec, Classic (Monte Albán IIIa/Pita phase): Anthropomorphic urn, A.D. 350–500
Japanese, Kamakura period, 1185–1333, Anonymous artist: Dainichi Nyorai 大日如来, 13th–14th century
Jusepe de Ribera, Spanish, 1591–1652: Studies of the Nose and Mouth, ca. 1622
Mel Bochner, American, born 1940: Self/Portrait, 2016
Cataloging is iterative
Reliance on specialist knowledges

Before: Akan peoples, *Badge of Honor*, late 19th century

After: Akan (Asante) artist, *Disk pendant or pectoral badge (akrafokɔnmu)*, late 19th century, before 1891
The object record

Record as surrogate for the object

Deep and rich with information to understand the content and context of a work without necessarily seeing object in person
The Museum System (TMS)
Transactional workhorse
Collections data in the world

API

Linked Open Data

IIIF
LAM Interoperability: Efforts in the field

Integrated data and seamless search

MCN 2015

MCN 2016
LAM Interoperability: Efforts at Princeton University repositories are hybrids

*Beyond the Silos of the LAMs: Collaboration Among Libraries, Archives, and Museums* (2008)

Collaborations to create cross-collection tools for access and teaching
What Did We Learn on the Show Tonight, Craig?
What Have We Learned?

- History of library description is long and that both hurts and helps
- Increasing amounts of digital/born-digital materials are challenging
- Fundamental difference between describing a published book vs. an unpublished object or objects
What Have We Learned?

- In all areas there was a tension between records needed for internal work vs. external discovery.
- Increasingly users expect to have deeper interactions with content through full-text search, emulation, or iiif discovery.
For further discussion...

All of our institutions probably use a mix of approaches

Does this mean we need to maintain different backend systems?

Does that mean we have to have different front-end systems?
For further discussion...

Do our professional organizations and the standards we create help us be interoperable? Or keep us from it?
For further discussion...

What can we do? What would success look like?