Week Six: Series, File, and Item-Level Description

INFO 6850: Special Topics in Information Management: Archives II (Fall 2015)
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WEEK SIX OBJECTIVES

1) Review the principles of arrangement and description
2) Examine key aspects of the Canadian standard Rules for Archival Description
3) Produce multi-level archival descriptions

ACTIVITIES

Series-level exercise and item-level description exercise

DUE

Report on tax certification

ASSIGNED READINGS

Krawczyk, Bob. "Cross Reference Heaven: The Abandonment of the Fonds as the Primary Level of Arrangement for Ontario Government Records." *Archivaria* 48 (1999): 131-153. http://journals.sfu.ca/archivar/index.php/archivaria/article/view/12720/13899.

Meehan, Jennifer. "Making the Leap from Parts to Whole: Evidence and Inference in Archival Arrangement and Description." *American Archivist* 72, no. 1 (Summer 2009): 72-90. http://archivists.metapress.com/content/kj672v4907m11x66/fulltext.pdf.

Daines, J. Gordon and Cory L. Nimer. "Re-Imagining Archival Display: Creating User-Friendly Finding Aids. Journal of Archival Organization 9, 1 (2011): 4-31. DOI: 10.1080/15332748.2011.574019.

Dancy, Richard. "Developing Archival Standards." *Archivaria* 78 (Fall 2014): 171-174. http://journals.sfu.ca.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/archivar/index.php/archivaria/article/view/13503/14832.

AGENDA

1) Announcements
2) Review tax certification
3) Discuss readings

4) Introduce archival description assignment

5) Review series-level descriptions

6) Item-level description exercise

PREPARE FOR DISCUSSION

Use the assigned readings to prepare for seminar style discussion that addresses questions such as:

1. What is the Australian "series system" and how does it work? What types of records are particularly suited to the series system?
2. Why did the Archives of Ontario abandon the fonds as the primary level of arrangement for Ontario government records?
3. What are some approaches to intellectual arrangement? What are some approaches to physical arrangement?
4. Meehan argues that archivists "construct" the "external and internal relationships of a body of records…on the basis of the inferences" drawn from contextual information gathered during the analysis of a body of records. Does an active relationship with a donor/creator change how archivists "infer" and "construct" the relationships of a body of records?
5. Gordon Daines and Cory Nimer argue that "single-level display" of finding aids, where a single component of a multilevel description is presented to users, has "the potential to transform the delivery and display of collection information while improving the user experience" and allows for "greater reuse of finding aid data." What are the advantages of full multilevel display of a finding aid? What are the advantages of single-level display?
6. How does single-level display allow for greater reuse of finding aid data?
7. The open-source application *Access to Memory* (AtoM) uses a single-level display of finding aid data but, as of version 2.2, also allows for PDF downloads of complete finding aids. Is this an "ideal" interface for the end-user? How could AtoM's single-level display be improved?
8. What does physical description mean in a digital world?
9. What are the three key changes that have occurred since RAD was introduced twenty-five years ago?

SERIES AND ITEM-LEVEL DESCRIPTION EXERCISES

A portion of the class will be spent reviewing series-level descriptions from the Dalhousie University Archives and other local archival institutions. Additional time will be spent creating item-level descriptions of photographs held by the Dalhousie University Archives.