DESCRIBING
ARCHIVES

A Content Standard

Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACS) was officially adopted as a standard by the Council of the Society of American Archivists in March 2005, following review by the SAA Standards Committee, its Technical Subcommittee for Descriptive Standards, and the general archival community.

CHAPTER 1

Levels of Description

DACS defines twenty-five elements that are useful in creating systems for describing archival materials. These systems can be of any type, ranging from simple paper-based files to complex digital information management systems. The output products of these systems—archival descriptions of all kinds and formats, printed on paper or encoded in EAD or MARC 21—must include at minimum a set of discrete descriptive elements that convey standardized information about the archival materials and creators being described. These *DACS* elements constitute a refinement of the twenty-six high-level elements of archival description defined in the *General International Standard Archival Description* (*ISAD(G)*).

Not all of the *DACS* elements are required in every archival description. Combinations of descriptive elements will vary depending on whether the archivist considers a specific description to be preliminary or complete, and whether it describes archival materials at a single level (e.g., collection level or item level) or at multiple levels that have a whole-part relationship.

Simple archival descriptive systems can be constructed using only the 25 elements articulated and defined by this standard; however, more detailed archival descriptive and management systems may require a number of additional elements, either defined by companion standards or standardized at the local level to meet the requirements of a specific repository.

The following requirements specify particular elements from Part I of *DACS* that should be used in output products—from basic collection-level accession records to fully encoded, multilevel finding aids—intended for the use of archivists or researchers in managing and using archival materials. They articulate a "minimum," "optimum," and "added value" usage of the elements defined by *DACS*, but are not intended to preclude use of other descriptive data that a repository deems necessary for its own descriptive systems or products. *DACS* does not specify the order or arrangement of elements in a particular descriptive output. Some systems or output formats, such as MARC 21 or EAD, provide specific guidance on the ordering of some or all elements. Others, such as a repository's preliminary accession record or a print finding aid, should include *DACS* elements in a logical and consistent manner determined by the repository's own procedures and standard practices. The requirements that follow are divided into two sections, one for single-level descriptions and one for multilevel descriptions.

Requirements for Single-level Descriptions

The following are examples of single-level descriptions:
- A preliminary accession record.
- A MARC 21 record not linked to other MARC 21 records.
- A database record in a repository's collections management database that describes archival materials only at a single level.
- A METS (Metadata Encoding and Transmission Standard)[18] record for a description of archival materials.

Single-level descriptions can describe archival materials at *any level*, from large accumulations commonly referred to by archivists as collections, record groups, fonds, or record series, to single items, and any level in between. They can, however, only describe that material at one level.

Single-level Minimum

A single-level description with the minimum number of *DACS* elements includes:
- Reference Code Element (2.1)
- Name and Location of Repository Element (2.2)
- Title Element (2.3)
- Date Element (2.4)
- Extent Element (2.5)
- Name of Creator(s) Element (2.6) *Note: At minimum, the person(s), family(ies) or organization(s) responsible for the creation or accumulation of the materials being described must be identified if known.*
- Scope and Content Element (3.1) *Note: In a minimum description, this element may simply provide a short abstract of the scope and content of the materials being described.*
- Conditions Governing Access Element (4.1)
- Language and Scripts of the Material Element (4.5)

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[18] The METS standard is an XML schema for encoding descriptive, administrative, and structural metadata for objects within a digital library. It is an initiative of the Digital Library Federation and is maintained by the Library of Congress. Information is available at: <http://www.loc.gov/standards/mets/>

Single-level Optimum

A single-level description with the optimum number of *DACS* elements includes:
- All of the elements included in Single-level Minimum above, plus the following:
- Administrative/Biographical History Element (2.7)
- Scope and Content Element (3.1) *Note: In an optimum description, this element should include a full description of the scope and content of the material being described.*
- Access points (See Overview of Archival Description).

Single-level Added Value

A single-level description using *DACS* elements to provide added value for researchers includes:
- All of the elements included in Single-level Optimum above, plus any other relevant elements the repository wishes to include.

Requirements for Multilevel Descriptions

The following are examples of multilevel descriptions:
- A preliminary collection inventory or register (regardless of whether presented in print or encoded in EAD or another encoding scheme).
- A full collection inventory or register (regardless of whether presented in print or encoded in EAD or another encoding scheme).
- Multiple linked MARC 21 records.
- A database record in a repository's collections management database that describes archival materials at more than one level.

Multilevel descriptions can describe archival materials beginning at any level (e.g., collection level, series level) and must include at least one sublevel. Typical multilevel descriptions begin with large accumulations commonly referred to by archivists as collections, record groups, fonds, or record series. *ISAD(G)* envisions a descriptive framework that recognizes four levels: fonds, series, file, and item; however, *DACS* elements can be used to describe materials arranged according to this or any other scheme of articulating levels of arrangement of archival materials.

Multilevel Minimum

The *top* level of a multilevel description with the minimum number of *DACS* elements includes:

- Reference Code Element (2.1)
- Name and Location of Repository Element (2.2)
- Title Element (2.3)
- Date Element (2.4)
- Extent Element (2.5)
- Name of Creator(s) Element (2.6) *Note: At minimum, the person(s), family(ies), or organization(s) responsible for the creation or accumulation of the materials being described must be identified if known.*
- Scope and Content Element (3.1) *Note: In a minimum description, this element may simply provide a short abstract of the scope and content of the materials being described.*
- Conditions Governing Access Element (4.1)
- Language and Scripts of the Material Element (4.5)
- Identification of the whole-part relationship of the *top* level to at least the *next subsequent* level in the multilevel description. This may be done through internal tracking within a particular descriptive system; if so, the output must be able to explicitly identify this relationship.

Each *subsequent* level of a multilevel description should include:

- All of the elements used at higher levels, unless the information is the same as that of a higher level or if it is desirable to provide more specific information. *Notes:*
    - *Name of Creator(s) Element (2.6): At subsequent levels of a multilevel description, this element is required only if the person(s) or organization(s) responsible for the creation or accumulation of the material at the subsequent level differs from the higher level(s). This can also be accomplished by using the Name Segment of the Title Element (2.3).*
    - *Scope and Content Element (3.1): Scope and contents are typically necessary for large units of aggregation and are not required at the file or item level if the Title Element (2.3) is sufficient to describe the material.*
- Identification of the whole-part relationship of *each* level to at least the *next subsequent* level in the multilevel description. This may be done through internal tracking within a particular descriptive system, or through an explicit statement of the relationship.

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Multilevel Optimum

The *top* level of a multilevel description with the optimum number of *DACS* elements includes:
- All of the elements included in Multilevel Minimum above, plus the following:
- Administrative/Biographical History Element (2.7)
- Scope and Content Element (3.1) *Note: In an optimum description, this element should include a full description of the scope and content of the materials being described.*
- Access points (See Overview of Archival Description).

Each *subsequent* level of that multilevel description should include:
- All of the elements included at the higher levels of the multilevel description, unless the information is the same as that of a higher level or if it is desirable to provide more specific information.
- Identification of the whole-part relationship of *each* level to at least the *next subsequent* level in the multilevel description. This may be done through internal tracking within a particular descriptive system, or through an explicit statement of the relationship.

Multilevel Added Value

A multilevel description using *DACS* elements to provide added value for researchers should include:
- All of the elements included in Multilevel Optimum above, plus any other elements the repository wishes to include.

Each *subsequent* level of that multilevel description should include:
- All of the elements included at the higher levels of the multilevel description, unless the information is the same as that of a higher level or if it is desirable to provide more specific information.
- Identification of the whole-part relationship of *each* level to at least the *next subsequent* level in the multilevel description. This may be done through internal tracking within a particular descriptive system, or through an explicit statement of the relationship.

Identity Elements

2.1 Reference Code
2.2 Name and Location of Repository
2.3 Title
2.4 Date
2.5 Extent
2.6 Name of Creator(s)
2.7 Administrative/Biographical History

2.1 Reference Code Element

Purpose and Scope

This element provides a unique identifier for the unit being described. The identifier may consist of three subelements: a local identifier, a code for the repository, and a code for the country.

> Commentary: This typically alphanumeric identifier frequently serves as a succinct local means of referring to the materials. When delivering a descriptive record outside of the repository holding the materials, this element should also contain a nationally sanctioned code for the repository and an internationally standardized code for the country in which the repository is located. Taken together, these three subelements form a unique machine-readable identifier for the materials being described.

- The local identifier code is a means of gaining access to the description of the materials or to the documents themselves. Determining the structure and function(s) of a local identifier code are matters of institutional policy. Examples of local identifiers include accession numbers, record group numbers, and call numbers.
- The repository identifier code is required only for purposes of consortial, national, or international exchange. The full name of the institution is recorded in the Name and Location of Repository Element (2.2).
- The country identifier code is required only for purposes of consortial, national, or international exchange.

Sources of Information

2.1.1. The codes for country and repository are taken from national and international code lists. Repositories should develop a local system that uniquely identifies discrete materials.

General Rules

2.1.2. Record a reference code that consists of a local identifier, a repository identifier, and a country identifier in accordance with the following rules.

Local Identifier

2.1.3. At the highest level of a multilevel description or in a single level description, provide a unique identifier for the materials being described in accordance with the institution's administrative control system. Optionally, supply unique identifiers at lower levels of a multilevel description.

> ```
> 95-24
> ```
> *Records collection identifier, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society*
>
> ```
> MC22
> ```
> *Personal papers collection identifier, Scripps Institute of Oceanography Archives*
>
> ```
> 632
> ```
> *Manuscript group identifier, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library*
>
> ```
> 79-GC-2-134
> ```
> *Record group, series, album, and item identifier, National Archives and Records Administration*

Repository Identifier

2.1.4. Provide a repository code assigned by the national organization responsible for assigning and maintaining repository identifiers.[19]

> ```
> CUI
> ```
> *Repository code for the University of California, Irvine Libraries*
>
> ```
> TxU-Hu
> ```
> *Repository code for the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin*

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[19] The Library of Congress is responsible for assigning repository codes and maintaining the list of assigned codes in the United States. National repository codes are constructed in accordance with the latest version of ISO 15511 (*International standard identifier for libraries and related organizations*).

Country Identifier

2.1.5. Provide a country code for the location of the repository as assigned by the International Standards Organization.[20]

> US
> *Code for the United States*
>
> Ca
> *Code for Canada*

EXAMPLES OF ENCODING FOR 2.1 REFERENCE CODE ELEMENT

Encoding at the highest level of description in EAD:

```
<unitid countrycode="us" repositorycode="cui">MS–SEA016</unitid>

<unitid countrycode="us" repositorycode="cus">MSS 0112</unitid>
```

Encoding at the highest level of description in MARC 21:

```
008  bb   031014i19781998cau       eng d
040  bb   ‡a CUI ‡e dacs ‡c CUI
099  b9   ‡a MS–SEA 016
852  bb   ‡a University of California, Irvine Libraries. ‡e 525
          Adjunct Lane, Irvine, CA 20033–1126. ‡n cau

008  bb   941228i19461998cau       eng d
040  bb   ‡a CUS ‡e dacs ‡c CUS
099  b9   ‡a MSS 0112
```

---

[20] The two-character country code is found in the latest version of ISO 3166-1 (*Codes for the representation of names of countries and their subdivisions*). While EAD requires the use of the ISO 3166-1 standard for names of countries, the MARC 21 standard has not yet adopted this code list. Use the code appropriate to the output system for a given description. The MARC Code List for Countries is used in archival cataloging (e.g., mixed materials) to indicate the country of the repository in the 008 field.

2.2 Name and Location of Repository Element

Purpose and Scope

This element identifies the name and location of the repository that holds the materials being described.

> Commentary: It may be possible for a system to generate the name of the repository from the repository identifier as specified in Rule 2.1.4.

Sources of Information

2.2.1. Take the information from institutional policies and procedures.

General Rules

2.2.2. Explicitly state the name of the repository, including any parent bodies.

```
The University of Texas at Austin, Harry Ransom Humanities
Research Center

The Minnesota Historical Society
```

2.2.3. Provide the location of the repository. If desirable, include the mailing address and other contact information.

```
Alabama Department of Archives and History. 624 Washington
Avenue, Montgomery, AL  36130-0100. (334) 242-4435.
```

EXAMPLES OF ENCODING FOR 2.2 NAME AND LOCATION OF REPOSITORY ELEMENT

Encoding in EAD:

```
<repository>
<corpname>The University of Texas at Austin
<subarea>Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center</subarea>
</corpname>
</repository>
```

Encoding in MARC 21:

```
852  bb   ‡a Alabama Department of Archives and History. ‡e 624
          Washington Avenue, Montgomery, AL 36310-0100.
```

2.3 Title Element

Purpose and Scope

This element provides a word or phrase by which the material being described is known or can be identified. A title may be supplied or formal.

> Commentary: A *supplied title* is one provided by the archivist when there is no formal title for the materials being described, or where the formal title is misleading or inadequate. The rules for recording a supplied title differ from the rules for recording a formal title. Archivists usually supply titles for archival materials.
>
> Supplied titles generally have two parts:
> - the name of the creator(s) or collector(s)
> - the nature of the materials being described
>
> A *formal title* is one that appears prominently on or in the materials being described and is most commonly found in material that has been published or distributed, such as a title on a book, report, map, or film. Formal titles can also be found on unpublished material that bears a meaningful name consciously given by the creator of the material, (e.g., a caption on a photograph, label on a folder, or leader on a film).
>
> In the absence of a meaningful formal title, a title must be supplied. The archivist must use professional judgment to determine when it is appropriate to supply a title rather than transcribing a label on a container that may be misleading. When they occur at all in archival materials, formal titles are most commonly found on files or items.

Sources of Information

2.3.1. When supplying a title, take the information from any reliable source, including the internal evidence of the materials being described, an external source such as a records schedule or communication with a donor, or a title on another copy or version of the materials being described.

2.3.2. When recording a formal title, transcribe the information from the prescribed source as described in the appropriate chapters in *AACR2* (which specify that formal titles are recorded exactly as to wording, order, and spelling, but not necessarily as to punctuation or capitalization) or to specialized standards for various types of material cited in Appendix B. Rules for transcribing formal titles are not provided here.

General Rules

2.3.3. When supplying title information, compose a brief title[21] that uniquely identifies the material, normally consisting of a name segment, a term indicating the nature of the

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[21] The supplied title should not be mistaken for a statement or abstract of the content of the unit being described; the supplied title simply names the unit as succinctly as possible. The contents of the unit, e.g., that of an individual letter, should be described in the Scope and Content Element.

unit being described,[22] and optionally a topical segment as instructed in the following rules. Do not enclose supplied titles in square brackets.

> Commentary:
> - In multilevel descriptions the name segment may be inherited from a higher level of description and may not need to be explicitly stated at lower levels.
> - When the repository is responsible for assembling a collection, do not provide, as part of the supplied title, the institution's name as the collector.
> - The topical segment should be used only when the identification of the material cannot be made clear from the name and nature elements.

Name segment

2.3.4. Record the name(s) of the person(s), family (families), or corporate body[23] predominantly responsible for the creation, assembly, accumulation, and/or maintenance of the materials.

```
Graciany Miranda Archilla papers

Bacot family papers

Bank of Cape Fear (Wilmington, N.C.) Hillsboro Branch records

Wisconsin Environmental Policy Act files

Cameron family account book

Caroline and Erwin Swann collection of caricature and cartoon
```

2.3.5. Record the name(s) in the form by which the creator or collector is generally known.[24]   Record the name(s) in the natural language order of the language of the person's or corporate body's country of residence or activity or the official language of the corporate body. The name may be abbreviated if a fuller form of the name appears elsewhere in the descriptive record (e.g., in the administrative/biographical history) or as an access point.

```
Bessye B. Bearden papers
```
not Bearden, Bessye B. papers

```
WAPOR records
```
Name of Creator(s) Element is World Association for Public Opinion Research

---

[22] The order of these elements is not prescribed.

[23] The name of more than one person or family can appear in the title; however, the name of only one corporate body can appear in the title.

[24] Guidance for choosing between different names of persons (including name changes) or between variant forms of the same name can be found in Chapter 12 (rules 12.1–12.3). Guidance for choosing between different names of corporate bodies or between variant forms of the same name can be found in Chapter 14 (rules 14.1–14.3).

2.3.6. If the name of the creator, assembler, or collector is not known, or if the repository has assembled the materials, do not record a name. In such cases, supply the nature of the archival materials for the title as instructed in rules 2.3.18-2.3.20 and 2.3.22.

Name segment for more than one person

2.3.7. If three or fewer persons are credited with, or predominantly responsible for, the creation of the materials as a whole, record their names in direct order.

```
John and Leni Sinclair papers

Eugenia Rawls and Donald Seawell theater collection
```

2.3.8. If responsibility for the creation of the materials is dispersed among more than three persons, record the name of the individual whose material predominates. If this does not apply, choose the name considered most appropriate.

2.3.9. Optionally, include all the names of the persons who are credited with or predominantly responsible for the creation of the materials.

Name segment for families

2.3.10. If the materials were created, assembled, accumulated, and/or used in the context of familial relations by individuals who share a common surname, record that name followed by the word "family."

```
Harvey family papers
```

2.3.11. If the materials were created, assembled, accumulated, and/or used in the context of familial relations by individuals who do not share a common surname, record all their names followed by the word "family."

```
Paul Hibbet Clyde and Mary Kestler family papers
```

2.3.12. Optionally, if the materials were created, assembled, accumulated, and/or used in the context of familial relations but one person's material predominates, record that person's full name followed by the word "family."

```
Andrew Swanson family papers
```

2.3.13. If two or three families are credited with, or predominantly responsible for, the creation of the materials, record all the family names followed by the word "families."

```
Short, Harrison, and Symmes families papers
```

2.3.14. If responsibility for the creation of the materials is dispersed among more than three families, record only the name of the family whose material predominates. If no one family's material predominates, choose the name considered most appropriate.

2.3.15. Optionally, include all the names of the families who are credited with, or predominantly responsible for, the creation of the materials.

Name segment for corporate bodies

Single corporate body see Rule 2.3.4.

More than one corporate body
2.3.16. If the records of more than one corporate body are included in the materials, record only one name in the title. Establish a consistent policy for selecting the name of the corporate body to be used in the title. While the name of only one corporate body can be included in the title, names of other corporate bodies whose records are included in the materials may be recorded in the Name of Creator(s) Element as specified in rule 9.9.

> ```
> British American Tobacco Company records
> ```
> *This body of corporate records includes records of* Cameron and Cameron, D.B. Tennant and Company, David Dunlop, Export Leaf Tobacco Company, and T.C. Williams Company, *all of which were tobacco exporting companies acquired by British American Tobacco Company.*

Corporate body whose name has changed
2.3.17. Where the name of the corporate body has changed, use the last (latest) name of the corporate body represented in the materials being described. Predecessor names of the corporate body may be recorded in the Name of Creator(s) Element as specified in rule 9.9.

> ```
> University of California, Irvine, Office of Research and Graduate
> Studies records
> ```
> *These records include those from this same body under two previous names,* Graduate Division (1964-1981) *and* Division of Graduate Studies and Research (1981-1987).
>
> ```
> Allied Theatres of Michigan records
> ```
> *These materials include records of this same body under its earlier name,* Motion Picture Theatre Owners of Michigan *(name changed in 1931).*

Nature of the archival unit

2.3.18. Where the materials being described consist of three or more forms of documents created, assembled, accumulated, and/or maintained and used by a government agency or private organization such as a business or club, supply the word "records" for the nature of the archival unit. Where the materials being described consist of three or more forms of documents created, assembled, accumulated, and/or maintained and used by a person or family, supply the word "papers" for the nature of the archival unit. When describing an intentionally assembled collection, supply the word "collection" to indicate the nature of the unit being described. This rule is generally only applied to the highest level of the archival unit being described.[25]

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[25] "Papers," "records,"and "collection" include materials in all media.

```
Coalition to Stop Trident records

St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church records

Mortimer Jerome Adler papers

Allyn Kellogg Ford collection of historical manuscripts

Semans family papers
```

2.3.19. Where the materials being described consist solely of one or two specific forms, supply those form(s) [26] for the nature of the archival unit. Express the forms in their order of predominance.

```
English Stage Company at the Royal Court Theatre correspondence

John E. Brennan outdoor advertising survey reports

William Gedney photographs and writings

Troy Kinney etchings and engravings

Sarah Dyer zine collection

Andrew Jackson letter

Speeches
```
Supplied title for a series within the Bessye B. Bearden papers

```
Audio and video recordings
```
Supplied title for a series within the Jacques Derrida papers

```
National Academy of Sciences correspondence
```
Supplied title for a file within the Frederick Reines papers

```
Council for Refugee Rights correspondence and reports
```
Supplied title for a file within the Project Ngoc records

2.3.20. Optionally, if one or two specific forms predominate but there are also other material types present, record the one or two most predominant forms followed by the phrase "and other material" in the supplied title and indicate the specific forms of material in the Scope and Content Element.

```
James M. Woodbury diary, letters, and other material

Sociedad Amigos de Arteaga, Inc. correspondence, flyers, and
other material
```
Supplied title for a file within the Genoveva de Arteaga papers

---

[26] *Form* means the physical (e.g., watercolor, drawing) or intellectual (e.g., diary, journal, daybook, minute book) characteristics of a document. Repositories are strongly encouraged to use standardized vocabulary when supplying form(s) of material as part of the supplied title.

Topic of the archival unit

2.3.21. Optionally, supply a brief term or phrase that most precisely and concisely characterizes the unit being described. The term or phrase should incorporate the form(s) of material that typifies the unit and reflects the function, activity, transaction, subject, individuals, or organizations that were the basis of its creation or use.

```
Clarence McGehee collection on Ruth St. Denis

Catherine Clarke civil rights collection

Collection of California vacation albums
```
Supplied title for a collection of purchased vacation albums assembled by Special Collections and Archives, University of California, Irvine.

```
Russian referendum collection
```
Supplied title for a collection of materials on the 1993 Russian referendum in support of the policies of Boris Yeltsin that was assembled by Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

```
Land agreements between the University of California and the
Irvine Company

Edith Wharton correspondence with Morton Fullerton

Oneida Nation petition to Jasper Parrish

Frank and Frances Robinson files on Upper Newport Bay

Correspondence regarding graduate assistantships

James Joyce letter to Maurice Saillet

Richard Nixon letter to H.R. Haldemann regarding the Watergate
break-in
```

2.3.22. When the subject of the collection is a person, and if no name has been recorded because the repository is the collector, express the title of the collection in a way that clearly indicates that the subject of the collection is not the collector.

```
Collection on Isadora Duncan
```
Collection is about Isadora Duncan, she is not the collector.

```
Collection of Robert Browning materials
```
Collection is materials by Robert Browning, he is not the collector.

EXAMPLES OF ENCODING FOR 2.3 TITLE ELEMENT

Encoding of supplied titles in EAD:

```
<unittitle>British American Tobacco Company records</unittitle>

<unittitle>James M. Woodbury diary, letters, and other
    material</unittitle>

<unittitle>Speeches</unittitle>
```

Encoding of supplied titles in MARC 21:

```
245  00   ‡a Project Ngoc records, ‡f 1978–1998

245  00   ‡a Clarence McGehee collection on Ruth St. Denis, ‡f 1908–
          1937

245  10   ‡a William Dickson Pearsall ‡k letter, ‡f 1892
```

2.4 Date Element

Purpose and Scope

This element identifies and records the date(s) that pertain to the creation, assembly, accumulation, and/or maintenance and use of the materials being described. This section describes types of dates and forms of dates.

> Commentary: It may be useful or necessary for archivists to record different types of dates for the materials being described, including
>
> **Date(s) of creation** are the dates that the documents in the unit being described were originally created (e.g., date of writing a letter, drawing a map, or painting a portrait) or the date that an event or image was captured in some material form (e.g., date that a photograph was taken, sound was originally recorded, or a film was shot). Dates of creation refer only to the activity of creation of individual documents that make up each unit (as opposed to the "creation" of an aggregate such as a series or file). This is the type of date recorded most often by archivists and manuscript catalogers not describing government or organizational records.
>
> **Date(s) of record-keeping activity** are the dates during which the unit being described was created, assembled, accumulated, and/or maintained and used *as a unit* in the conduct of affairs by the organization or individual responsible for its provenance. They are distinct from the dates of creation of individual documents. Although the dates of record-keeping activity may often coincide with the dates of creation, the date types differ in two ways. First, the date(s) of record-keeping activity refer to the dates of a number of interrelated activities (including, but not limited to, creation and accumulation); and secondly, the activities pertain to the unit as a whole as opposed to individual documents. Records may be accumulated and used for a current purpose long after they were originally created, for example, where much earlier records are assembled to support an investigation or a legal action.
>
> When dates of creation and dates of record-keeping activity are the same, record only the former. Dates of record-keeping activity are most often recorded by archivists working with government records, organizational archives, or other materials where it is important to account for functions and activities.
>
> **Date(s) of publication** are recorded if the unit being described is a commercially issued or mass-produced item. Record this date information (including dates of publishing, distributing, releasing, and issuing of items) according to rules in various chapters of *AACR2* or other appropriate standards (see Appendix B). Dates of publication are most often recorded when describing items.
>
> **Date(s) of broadcast** are dates on which sound recordings or moving image materials were broadcast on radio or television. Record this date information according to rules in various chapters of *AACR2* or other appropriate standards (see Appendix B). Dates of broadcast are most often recorded when describing items.

Exclusions

2.4.1. If the material being described is a reproduction, record the details about the reproduction, including the date(s) of reproduction, if known, in the Scope and Content Element (3.1.7). If the material being described is the original and the repository wishes

to provide details about the availability of copies, record that information in the Existence and Location of Copies Element (6.2).

Sources of Information

2.4.2. Take the information from any reliable source, including the internal evidence of the materials being described.

General Rules

2.4.3. Record dates of creation, record-keeping activity, publication, or broadcast as appropriate to the materials being described.

2.4.4. Alternatively, if relevant and deemed necessary by the repository and if the descriptive system permits it, record multiple types of dates, labeling each clearly.[27] When recording multiple date types, explain each in the Scope and Content Element (3.1).

2.4.5. Record the year(s) in Western-style Arabic numerals. If the date found in or on the unit being described is not of the Gregorian or Julian calendar,[28] record the date as found and follow it with the year(s) of the Gregorian or Julian calendar in parentheses. Specify the name of the calendar, such as Republican, Jewish, Chinese, in a note (see 7.1.2)

> 2628 (1968)
> *Note: Dated in accordance with the Chinese calendar.*
>
> an 14 (i.e., 1805)
> *Note: Dated in accordance with the French Republican calendar.*

2.4.6. Record the date(s) of the unit being described either as a range of dates or as a single date.

Date Ranges

Inclusive dates

2.4.7. If the materials comprising or the record-keeping activity relating to the unit being described span a period of time, always record the inclusive dates, that is, the earliest and latest dates of the materials or activity in question.

> 1849–1851

---

[27] Most MARC-based systems will allow only one date type and the repository's ability to label dates will be very limited. EAD and other systems are more flexible in this area.
[28] Direction for converting dates after 1582 from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian calendar is provided in *AACR2* rule 22.17A n. 16.

2.4.8. When further accruals are expected, record the inclusive dates pertaining to the holdings currently in the custody of the repository. Record information about expected accruals in the Accruals Element (5.4). When the accruals are received, revise the date information accordingly.

> 1979–1993
> *not* 1979–
> *not* 1979–(ongoing)

2.4.9. The date(s) of a unit being described must fall within the range of dates of the unit of which it forms a part. This rule applies to both dates of creation and dates of record-keeping activity.

> 1934–1985
>> *Dates of record-keeping activity for a body of corporate records.*
>
> 1945–1960
>> *Dates of record-keeping activity for a series within the above.*
>
> 1950–1955
>> *Dates of record-keeping activity for a file within the above.*

Predominant or bulk dates

2.4.10. Optionally, where the dates pertaining to the majority of the documents in the unit being described differ significantly from the inclusive dates, provide predominant or bulk dates. Specify them as such, preceded by the word "predominant" or "bulk." Never provide predominant or bulk dates without also providing inclusive dates.

> 1785–1960, bulk 1916–1958
>
> 1942–1998, predominant 1975–1991

2.4.11. Optionally, if there is a significant gap in the chronological sequence of the documents in the unit being described, where providing predominant/bulk dates would be misleading, record the anomalous date(s) separated by commas.[29] Explain significant chronological gaps in the materials in the Scope and Content Element (3.1).

> 1827, 1952–1978
>
> 1975, 2002

---

[29] Repositories are encouraged to establish consistent policies and procedures regarding the maximum number of anomalous dates to record.

Estimated date ranges

2.4.12. At all levels of description, where the earliest or latest dates pertaining to the unit being described are estimates, indicate the estimated dates in a clear and consistent fashion.[30]

```
approximately 1952-1978

circa 1870-1879
```

Single dates

2.4.13. If the materials fall within a single year, record that date or a more specific date therein.

```
1975

1975 March-August
```

Exact single dates

2.4.14. For descriptions of a single item, record exact dates in a consistent and unambiguous fashion, preferably expressed as year-month-day.[31]

```
1906 March 17
```

Estimated single dates

2.4.15. If no date can be found on or in the material itself or determined from any other source, estimate the nearest year, decade, century or other interval as precisely as possible. Record estimated dates in a consistent fashion.

```
probably 1867

approximately 1925

before 1867

after 1867 January 5

1892 or 1893

1890s

circa August 1975
```

---

[30] It is recommended, though not required, that terms reflecting estimation be spelled out rather than abbreviated, as abbreviations may not be understood by all users.

[31] Expression of dates as all numerals is discouraged due to the differing conventions in the order of information.

No dates

2.4.16. When recording date(s) for files and items, if the unit being described bears no date and the institution does not wish to or it may be misleading to record an estimated date, use "undated." Do not use the abbreviations "n.d." or "s.d."

EXAMPLES OF ENCODING FOR 2.4 DATE ELEMENT

Encoding at any level of description in EAD. Dates that a repository wishes to be computer searchable should be normalized according to ISO 8601 *Representation of Dates and Times*.

```
<unitdate normal="1975">1975</unitdate>

<unitdate type="inclusive" normal="1849/1851">1849–1851</unitdate>

<unitdate normal="19060317">1906 March 17</unitdate>

<unitdate type="inclusive" normal="1785/1960">1785–1960</unitdate>
<unitdate type="bulk" normal="1916/1958">bulk 1916–1958</unitdate>

<unitdate type="inclusive" normal="1870/1879">circa 1870–
1879</unitdate>

<unitdate normal="1892/1893">1892 or 1893</unitdate>

<unitdate type="inclusive" normal="1862/1969" label="Dates of
Creation">1862–1969</unitdate>
<unitdate type="inclusive" normal="1957–1969" label="Dates of
Record-keeping Activity">1957–1969</unitdate>
```

Encoding at the highest level of description in MARC 21:

```
245  00   ‡a Project Ngoc records, ‡f 1978–1998.

245  10   ‡a Henry David Thoreau letter and engraving, ‡f 1847.

245  10   ‡a Willis H. Warner papers, ‡f 1884–1964, ‡g bulk 1920–
          1963.

245  10   ‡a United Farm Workers Information Fair collection, ‡f
          circa 1968–1972.

245  00   ‡a David Douglas Duncan photographs
260  bb   ‡c 1935–2004
```

2.5 Extent Element

Purpose and Scope

This element indicates the extent and the physical nature of the materials being described. This is handled in two parts, a number (quantity) and an expression of the extent or material type. The second part of the extent element may be either:

- the physical extent of the materials expressed either as the items, containers or carriers, or storage space occupied; or
- an enumeration of the material type(s), usually physical material type(s), to which the unit being described belongs. Material types may be general or specific.

Repositories should establish a consistent method of articulating statements of extent.

If the description of particular media or individual items requires more detail, such as other physical characteristics or dimensions, see the specific chapters in *AACR2* or the medium-specific rules indicated in the Introduction to Part I and Appendix B.

If the material type has been provided in the title statement, do not repeat it in the statement of extent.

> Commentary: It is important to include information about the quantity and physical nature of the materials for several reasons. It enables users to eliminate material that is irrelevant to their needs; for example, a user may want only the material containing photographs. It also enables users to plan their research: knowing the quantity is important because it takes longer to go through 30 boxes or 20 hours of sound recordings than it does to go through one box or five hours. The amount of detail provided at any level of description is a matter of institutional policy, depending on user needs and available resources. At lower levels in a multilevel description, extent may be expressed as an enumeration of boxes or folders rather than as a narrative extent statement.

> Further details about quantity and physical characteristics may also be provided in the Scope and Content Element (3.1).

Exclusions

2.5.1. Record information about physical characteristics that affect the use of the unit being described in the Physical Access Element (4.2).

Sources of Information

2.5.2. Derive the information from the materials themselves or take it from transfer documents.

General Rules

2.5.3. Record the numerical quantity associated with each expression of physical extent, containers or carriers, number of items, or material type, using the imperial system of measurement in Arabic numerals, unless the repository has made a decision to use the metric system.

2.5.4. Record the quantity of the material in terms of its physical extent as linear or cubic feet, number of items, or number of containers or carriers.[32]

```
45 linear feet

5,321 items

16 boxes

2 film reels

15 folders

Box 10   Folder 6
```

2.5.5. Optionally, record the quantity in terms of material type(s). Material types may be general, such as textual materials,[33] graphic materials, cartographic materials, architectural and technical drawings, moving images, and sound recordings, or more specific types such as those found in *AACR2* and various thesauri.[34]

```
10 boxes of textual materials

1,000 photographs

50 technical drawings

800 maps

12 audio cassettes
```

2.5.6. Optionally, qualify the statement of physical extent to highlight the existence of material types that are important.

```
45 linear feet, including 200 photographs and 16 maps

3 boxes, including photographs and audio cassettes
```

---

[32] It is recommended, though not required, that terms reflecting physical extent be spelled out rather than abbreviated, as abbreviations may not be understood by all users.

[33] It is usually assumed that archival materials are generally textual in nature, so it may not be necessary to supply the term "textual materials" unless it is desirable to distinguish from other material types.

[34] See especially *Art and Architecture Thesaurus*, *Thesaurus for Graphic Material,* and *Library of Congress Authorities* (full citations provided in Appendix B).

Multiple Statements of Extent

2.5.7. If a parallel expression of extent is required or desirable, add this information in parentheses.

```
2,400 photographs (12 linear feet)

89.3 linear feet (150 boxes and 109 oversize folders)

71 maps (3.5 cubic feet)

1 diary (352 pages)
```

2.5.8. Optionally, provide multiple statements of extent to highlight the existence of material types that are important.

```
12 linear feet of textual materials, 68 photographs, 16
architectural drawings
```

Approximate Statements of Extent

2.5.9. If parts of the material being described are numerous and the exact number cannot be readily ascertained, record an approximate number and indicate that it is an estimate.

```
approximately 35 linear feet

about 24,000 maps

circa 11,000 photographs
```

EXAMPLES OF ENCODING FOR 2.5 EXTENT ELEMENT

Encoding at any level of description in EAD:

```
<physdesc><extent>45 linear feet</extent></physdesc>

<physdesc><extent>50 technical drawings</extent></physdesc>

<physdesc><extent>3 boxes, including photographs and audio
   cassettes</extent></physdesc>

<physdesc><extent>89.3 linear feet (150 boxes and 109 oversize
   folders)</extent></physdesc>

<physdesc><extent>12 linear feet of textual materials</extent>,
   <extent>68 photographic prints</extent>, <extent>16 architectural
   drawings</extent></physdesc>

<container type="Box">10</container>
<container type="Folder">6</container>
```

Encoding at the highest level of description in MARC 21:

```
300  bb ‡a 45 ‡f linear feet

300  bb ‡a 3 ‡f boxes, ‡b including photographs and audio cassettes

300  bb ‡a 89.3 ‡f linear feet (150 boxes and 109 oversize folders)

300  bb ‡a 12 ‡f linear feet of textual materials

300  bb ‡a 68 ‡f photographs

300  bb ‡a 33,000 ‡f items (69.0 linear feet)
```

2.6 Name of Creator(s) Element

A description of the context in which the materials being described were created, assembled, accumulated, and/or maintained is as important as the description of the materials themselves. One of the most significant aspects of establishing the context of creation is to identify the individual, family, or organization responsible for that process. Depending on the materials being described, the archivist may express that relationship by various terms: creator, author, collector, artist, cartographer, or, more generically, as the provenance of the materials. Multiple individuals and organizations may serve multiple roles with respect to a given body of records. For example, a published document might be filed with a regulatory agency. The company that created a report would be its author, while the government body was responsible for assembling this report with others into a series of records. Both played a role in the creation of the materials that have come to the repository.

Detailed rules in Part II, Chapter 9, Identifying Creators, specify which name(s) should be provided in the Name of Creator(s) Element to document the processes by which the records were created, assembled, accumulated, and/or maintained. Specific systems may store information about creators either in the descriptions of records or separately in a linked authority file. In addition, names of creators serve as access points (see Overview of Archival Description).

2.7 Administrative/Biographical History Element

A description of the context in which the materials being described were created, assembled, accumulated, and/or maintained is as important as the description of the materials themselves. One of the most significant aspects of the description of the context of creation is the Administrative/Biographical History Element. Such descriptions may be a part of the description of the materials, but they may also be created and stored in an authority system separate from the description of the materials. To facilitate such systems, the rules for creating an administrative or biographical history are provided in Part II, Chapter 10. The rules apply to either situation—administrative history and biographical information as part of the description of the materials or as maintained in a separate authority system.