Archival Organization and Description
Overview of DACS

ARCHIVAL DESCRIPTION

- Archives (and archivists usually use this term as a singular—i.e., “this is the archives” not, “this is the archive”), contain what are referred to by scholars as primary sources.
- Primary sources are the untouched raw material of the past; the eye-witness testimony (indeed as documents can be said to represent it) of people, cultures, events, etc., that took place in the past.
- Primary sources are contrasted with secondary sources—books, journals, etc.—which represent filtered versions of events.
- A published history of the Napoleonic Wars represents one author’s opinion about the record of the events.
- Archival documents related to the Napoleonic Wars are the unfiltered evidence that other historians might use to come to differing conclusions about the course of events.

ARCHIVAL DESCRIPTION

- Archival description is the activity of creating access to collections of archival documents, personal papers or manuscripts.
- Description is usually an activity that accompanies the task called archival arrangement, in which the documents (etc.) are preserved and repackaged so as to ensure both preservation and access.
- Archival description is based on two principles, called provenance and original order (we also call this respect des fonds).

ARCHIVAL DESCRIPTION

- Provenance means “origin”—and is the principle that governs primary access to collections.
- A set of archival documents (etc.) is of most value as eye-witness testimony to the activities that produced it.
- Therefore, an archivist would never separate a set of documents that came from a particular source. Rather, the documents are kept together and keyed to that resource.
- Thus, in archival description to so-called “main entry” for a set of documents is that entity that caused the documents to be collected.
- The papers of Ernest Hemingway (even if they are all letters by Faulkner), is entered under the heading for Hemingway, and they will be kept together and identified as “the papers of Ernest Hemingway.” (Incidentally, this is a made-up example.)

ARCHIVAL DESCRIPTION

- Original order goes one step further, and says that the order in which Hemingway kept the papers has some meaning in and of itself as eye-witness testimony.
- Therefore, while an archivist might take pains to pack the papers in acid-free paper or boxes, the order of the papers is carefully recorded and maintained, whatever it might have been.
- For the historian, these two principles are key aids to investigation.
Archives and Manuscripts
Arrangement and Description

Evidence or Artifact-Centered Description

- The primary purposes of description in archival, manuscript, and museum environments are to identify, authenticate, contextualize, preserve, and exhibit evidence.
- Focus is on context, content, and, increasingly, structure.
- Not all materials need to be described to the same degree in every circumstance.
- Metadata for archival and museum holdings that might be distributed across several parts of a library system are often contained in a single, highly complex finding aid or registrarial record.
- Materials are generally unique and do not circulate.

Evidence

- Evidence ... denotes something related to understanding, something that, if found and correctly understood, could change one's knowledge and beliefs concerning that matter” -- Buckland, 1991.
- The passive ability of documents and objects to provide insight into the processes, activities, and events that led to their creation for legal, historical, archaeological and other purposes.

Problems faced in describing primary source materials such as archives and manuscripts

- How do you document and ensure understanding of evidence through the description process?
- Inherent problems with describing non-bibliographic materials:
  - Materials may have no title page.
  - You may want to collate a variety of different types of materials (e.g., raw data, photographs, correspondence).
  - Individual items may not be sufficiently distinct or even important to describe.
  - Original materials are unlikely to have been created with secondary uses in mind.

Nature of Archives

- Collections rather than individual items are the units of intellectual analysis.
- Collections may be physically and intellectually subdivided.
- Catalog descriptions may be created for any level of the hierarchy: for the entire collection, for a series within it, for a particular series within it, for a particular file unit such as an individual inmate case file, or even a single piece therein.
- Because collections grow organically from the activities, lives and actions of organizations and individuals, the archivist must respect and preserve such provenance.
- The organic nature of archives also affects their physical arrangement and organization.

Nature of Archives

- A collection might contain items in only a single physical format or many.
- Each collection is unique.
- Most collections lack the formal elements of publication such as title pages, statement of authorship, and details of imprint.
- The catalog record is a basic component in the system of descriptive finding aids but certainly not the only one used in most archival institutions.
Archival description

- Focus on provenance and original order places more emphasis on context and structure than on detailed description of content.
- Dynamic - manages records through the life cycle, and secures the archival bond.
- Collective and hierarchical - intellectual and physical levels.
- Requires an understanding and delineation of the structures and processes of the creator.
- Reference archivist often translates a subject-based query into a provenance-based answer.

Differences: Bibliographic vs. Archival Description

- Archival materials: Generated in the course of doing business/living lives, descriptions are abstractions, focus on description of content.
- "Tidy vs. messy"

Respect des fonds (1841)

- Concerned with maintaining the integrity of the records or papers and origination of the principle of provenance.
- Fonds = the whole of the documents, regardless of form or medium, organically created and/or accumulated, and used by a person, family, or corporate body in the conduct of personal or corporate activity.

Respect des fonds

- Principle that the records created, accumulated, and/or maintained and used by an organization or individual must be kept together in their original order, if it exists or has been maintained, and not be mixed or combined with the records of another individual or corporate body.

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Provenance

- Relationship between an activity and the records generated by that activity.
- Assumption that this relationship is organic.
- Records are created for non-historical reasons.
- Understanding the relationship between the activity and the record is fundamental to understanding the record.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Libraries</th>
<th>Archives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method of Creation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Received</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Arranged</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How described</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where described</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How accessed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature</td>
<td>Published, discrete, make sense on own, multiple copies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creator</td>
<td>Many</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method of Creation</td>
<td>Each created separately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Received</td>
<td>Selected as items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Arranged</td>
<td>By subject classification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How described</td>
<td>By item</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where described</td>
<td>Built into item itself (provided title, author, CIP data), in catalog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How accessed</td>
<td>Items circulate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature</td>
<td>Unpublished, grouped with related items, make no sense on own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creator</td>
<td>One parent organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method of Creation</td>
<td>Organically produced as part of normal business or life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Received</td>
<td>Appraised as groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Arranged</td>
<td>Provenance and original order (structure and function)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How described</td>
<td>In aggregate (record group, series, collection)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where described</td>
<td>Prepared by archivist (e.g., supplied title) in finding aids, guides, inventories, databases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How accessed</td>
<td>No circulation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Provenance**

- Principle of provenance states that records should be maintained according to their origin and not intermingled with those created by another person or agency.

**Principle of Original Order**

- Records have the most meaning when grouped and examined collectively.
- The way in which the original creator arranged the records sheds light on the activity whereby those records were created.
- By adopting the original filing arrangement, archivists do not have to commit as many resources to organizing records.

**Limitations of provenance-based access**

- If materials are poorly arranged and described to begin with.
- Hierarchical relationships change over time.
- Different levels and functions in different hierarchies.
- Resource-intensive and dynamic descriptions.
- How to assist users in understanding context.
- Static system - record unit can only go in one place.

**Limitations of Original Order**

- Records may not be arranged in the most convenient way for secondary use (especially in manuscripts repositories).
- With loss of clerical staff and adoption of desktop computing, filing is becoming increasingly idiosyncratic.

**What can collection-level description do well?**

- Managing voluminous resources.
- Managing resources that are hierarchical in nature.
- Managing resources in multiple media.
- Managing heterogeneous unpublished materials.
- Need to describe at appropriate levels of granularity.
- Retention of context.

**Levels of Arrangement**

- Schema allowing archivists to talk about a grouping of archival or manuscript materials in a hierarchical way similar to the structural relationships that exist between files and documents.
Levels of Arrangement

• Repository/collection/record group or fonds
• Subgroup(s)
• Series
• Subseries
• File unit (e.g., folder, file)
• Item (e.g., individual document)

Levels of Arrangement

• Collection: used in American archival context, referring to a group of materials associated with an individual, a family, or a corporate body, which may have been generated either
  – “organically” as a by-product of the everyday life/operations of the person or family or corporate body; or
  – “artificially” (i.e. regardless of provenance)

Levels of Arrangement

• Fonds: used in Anglo-Canadian archival practice, has a narrower definition than “collection” in that it refers exclusively to organically generated records and documents. The evidential and research value of the interrelated materials within fonds is strongly tied to their provenance, the context of their common origins.

Series and Subseries

• Series and subseries arise from some commonality among the contents. That similarity may rest on:
  – Physical qualities (genre), for example a map series, photographs, or bound volumes
  – Document form or function, for example, minutes, land deeds, notes, or business correspondence
  – Creator, for example, an individual family member, a corporate branch, or a corporate officer
  – Time, for example, retirement years, war-time effort, term of public official
  – Place, for example, in a collection of regional records, the records on each member unit can serve as a series

Examples

• Charles E. Williams papers organized into two series
  – School and college records, 1907-1930
  – World War I letters, 1916-1917
• Bonney Family papers, 1840-1938 arranged in three series
  – Samuel Bonney papers, 1840-1864
  – Catherine V.R. Bonney papers, 1840-1892
  – Emma C. Bonney papers, 1880-1938
• Hot Coffee, Nevada town clerk records arranged in three series
  – Town board meeting minutes, 1981-1995
  – Election records, 1920-1995
  – Registration of births and deaths, 1891-1995
• National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses records, 1908-1958 organized in two series
  – Minutes
  – Correspondence (in three subseries)
    – General correspondence
    – Correspondence on licensure
    – Correspondence on discrimination in hiring

Manuscript Description

• Provenantial, or sometimes, subject-based description
• Collection-level, sometimes detailed down to the item level
• Description of circumstances of collection
• Original order is generally, but not exclusively maintained
Objectives of Archival Description

- To establish control over:
  - the records themselves
  - essential information about the records
  - knowledge of the content/context/structure of the records
  - To document the authenticity of the records
  - To establish the archival bond

Intellectual Control

- Aiding research and reference use of collections by:
  - laying out an overview of repository holdings
  - detailing the contents of record groups and collections
  - guiding the user through collections to pertinent material
  - Explicating the context of the materials

Administrative Control

- Tracking administrative information necessary for the archivist to manage collections effectively
  - recording storage location of collections
  - documenting provenance and authenticity
  - detailing availability for use (e.g., ownership, confidentiality, brittleness)

Steps in Archival Arrangement and Description

- Accessioning archival records
- Establishing contextual information for arrangement and description
- Arranging the records
- Physically processing the records
- Describing the records
- Developing access tools

Principles of Description

- "Multilevel Description"
  - Proceed from general to specific
  - Provide information relevant to the level of description
  - Link each level of description to next higher unit of description
  - Do not repeat information, provide it only at highest appropriate level

Finding Aid

- Basic Access Tool is the “Finding Aid” also known as ‘inventory’ or ‘register’.
  - Prefatory material
  - Introduction
  - Biographical sketch/agency history
  - Scope and content note
  - Series description (organization)
  - Container Listing
  - Index (less used now with electronic finding aids)
**Finding Aid**

- A finding aid is a single document that places the materials in context by consolidating information about acquisition and processing; provenance, including administrative history or biographical note; scope of the collection, including size, subjects, media; organization and arrangement; and an inventory of the series and the folders.

**Description and Cataloging: The Pyramid**

- Surrogate 2 (the catalog record)
- Surrogate 1 (the finding aid)
- The collection itself

**Elements of Description**

- 26 in ISAD (G)
- Identity
  - Reference code, title, dates, level of description
- Context
  - Name of creator, biographical or admin history, source of materials
- Content/Structure
  - Scope/content, appraisal information, arrangement
- Conditions of Access/Use
- Allied Materials (copies, originals, related)
- Notes
- Description Control (author of description, revisions)

**Describing Archives: A Content Standard**

- Provides rules/advice about the quality and structure of informational content
  - 8 principles
  - What to put in the 26 elements recommended by ISAD (G)
  - Rules for describing creators and forms of names
  - Complement to AACR2
  - Provides mapping to appropriate data structure standards

**MARC21**

- Advantages: Can use regular library software, provides integrated access with non-archival materials
- Disadvantages: Can undermine provenance, relationship to other materials may be lost
Typical Fields for Cataloging Archival Materials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field Description</th>
<th>MARC Field</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Name</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Name</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>245a,b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusive Dates</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Description (volume)</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrangement/ Organization</td>
<td>351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biographical/Historical note</td>
<td>540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope/content note</td>
<td>545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrictions on Access</td>
<td>556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terms of use</td>
<td>640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provenance</td>
<td>651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject added entry</td>
<td>650a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal name added entry</td>
<td>650b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal name as subject</td>
<td>660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate name as subject</td>
<td>690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link to finding aid or digital collection</td>
<td>856</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ARCHIVAL DESCRIPTION USING DACS AND MARC21

- When AACR2 was published in 1978, its fourth chapter was headed “Manuscripts.”
- It was really intended for use by libraries who held few, individual manuscripts.
- But as pressure for archivists to join the world of shared and electronic resources mounted, there were unsuccessful attempts to use AACR2 as a shell for archival description.
- In frustration, but also with a great deal of foresight, archivists generated a great deal of discussion about their shared vision of their work. One result was *Archives, Personal Papers, and Manuscripts* edited by Stephen Henson.

DACS Background

- *Archives, Personal Papers & Manuscripts* (APPM), 1980s
  - New Technologies with Web, XML, EAD
  - Revision to include rules for finding aids and catalog records
  - ISAD (International Standard Archival Description) and ISAAR (CPF) [International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families]
- CUSTARD Project (Canadian-U.S. Task Force on Archival Description), 2001
  - Replace APPM and RAD (Rules for Archival Description)
  - Accommodate ISAD and ISAAR (CPF)
  - Apply to all types of archival material
  - Apply to all levels of description (MARC to finding aid)
  - Apply regardless of descriptive output (MARC, EAD, DB)
  - Too many differences between Canada and US
  
How DACS Developed

- AACR2 (Chapter 4)
- RAD
- ISAD(G) + ISAAR(CPF)
- CUSTARD
- USTARD
- DACS (end of 2004)

Benefits of DACS

- Provides standards
- Enables archivists to cooperate inter- and intradepartmentally
- Allows interoperability
- Archives can submit materials to national and international databases (e.g. OCLC, ArchivesGrid, other portals)
- Ultimately benefits researchers themselves

Areas of Agreement: DACS and RAD

- No abbreviations
- No square brackets
- Rules are output neutral
- Many rules are the same
RAD AND DACS Differences

RAD
- Basic rules that encompass the range of media found in archives (photographs, maps, sound recordings, etc.)
- Two parts
  - Part I. Describing Archival Materials
  - Part II. Describing Creators

DACS
- No rules for special media. Encourages archivists to follow other rules for specific media (e.g. AMIM, Graphic Materials)
- Three parts
  - Part I. Describing Archival Materials
  - Part II. Describing Creators
  - Part III. Forms of Name

RAD AND DACS Differences

RAD
- "Fonds" used for nature of archival unit
- For undated materials: Date must be estimated at all levels of description
- Includes rules for transcription of titles

DACS
- "Papers" and "Records" used for nature of archival unit
- For undated materials: may record "Undated" at lower levels of description
- No rules for transcription of titles

RAD AND DACS Differences

RAD
- Distinguishes between five types of nominal access points for persons, families and corporate bodies – author, collector, creator, custodian, and provenance
- "Artificial" collections not described at fonds level

DACS
- Confletes these aspects of creatership into a single concept that can be applied at all levels of description
- "Intentionally assembled" collections described using DACS

RAD AND DACS Differences

RAD
- Rules for each element indicate whether it is required and at what levels of description
- No discussion of topical subjects, form/genre, functions, and occupations as access points
- Examples are output neutral

DACS
- Chapter 1 "Levels of Description" outlines required elements
- Provides more guidance on access points and discusses topical subjects, etc.
- Provides examples in EAD and MARC21 for each element

Relationship to APPM

APPM
- Only for catalog records
  - APPM has 2 parts
    - I. Description
    - II. Headings & Uniform Titles

DACS
- Applies to all levels of description
- DACS has 3 parts
  - I. Describing Archival Materials
  - II. Describing Creators
  - III. Forms of Names
- More guidance on content of the data element
- DACS omits areas irrelevant to archival material (bibliographic series)

General International Standard Archival Description (ISAD(G)v2)

- Developed by the International Council on Archives
  - 1st ed. 1994; 2nd ed. 1999
- Agreed-on data elements and basic structure that the international archival community applies to describing archival materials
- For whatever reason, ISAD(G) has been largely ignored in the U.S.; many archivists have never heard of it
- DACS is based very closely on ISAD(G)
- ISAD(G) does not tell you where to find the data you need or how to format it
- Nothing revolutionary about ISAD(G). It merely articulates what has become common practice among archivists
- DACS combines the role of ISAD(G) and APPM: it defines the data elements and provides guidance on identifying, choosing, and formulating the information that belongs in each element
General International Standard Archival Description (ISAD(G)v2): General Principles

- As much as possible, repositories should keep records an organization created, accumulated, and/or maintained in their original order.
- When processing collections, archivists should arrange materials according to a system of hierarchal levels which give priority to the intellectual relationships within the collection.
- Given the multilevel nature of archival description, the archivist should present the information from the most general to the most specific.
- The researcher cannot fully understand the context or structure of a collection without knowledge of the principle creators and the provenance of the documents.

Wise Words on Archival Description

"Any descriptive program should take into account several questions cogently posed in the Report of the Canadian Subject Indexing Working Group:
- Who uses the archives?
- What do users want?
- Why do users want it?
- How do users go about getting it?"

The answers to those questions can significantly affect the nature of archival arrangement and description. They will influence the types of access tools provided, the level of description, type of subject, topic, or provenance-based access provided, and the delivery methods, such as published guides, online catalogs, or encoded finding aids.


Standards Landscape for Descriptive Data

"The nice thing about standards is that there are so many of them to choose from."

- Data Structure Standards: MARC, EAD, DC, MODS
- Data Content Standards: AACR2, APPM, CCO, DACS
- Data Value Standards: LCSH, AAT, TGM

"Standards are like toothbrushes, everyone agrees they're a good thing but nobody wants to use anyone else's."

-Rachel Frick

ISAD(G)/DACS

ISAD(G) only / DACS only

- Reference Code
- Name/Location of Repository
- Title
- Date(s)
- Level of Description
- Extent
- Names of Creator(s)
- Admin/Bio History
- Scope and Content
- System of Arrangement
- Conditions Governing Access
- Physical/Technical Access (2 separate elements in DACS)
- Conditions Governing Reproduction
- Languages/Scripts of Material
- Finding Aids
- Archival History – Custodial History
- Immediate Source of Acquisition
- Appraisal/Destruction/ Scheduling
- Accruals
- Existence/Location of Originals
- Related Archival Materials
- Publication Note
- Note(s)
- (1) Archivists Note / (2) Rules or Conventions / (3) Date(s) of Description – Description Control

Overview of DACS

- DACS is ...
  - A data content standard
  - Designed to be used by U.S. archivists with a variety of data structure standards
  - Some of those data structure standards are
    - ISAD(G): General International Standard Archival Description
      - Note: ISAD(G) is a very high-level conceptual standard that provides the basic framework for the archival descriptive elements for which DACS provides content rules
    - EAD: Encoded Archival Description
    - MARC21
    - Local standard: Your own, locally rationalized, well-documented, highly useful print finding aid format

Overview of DACS

- DACS is ...
  - Output neutral, which means ...
  - A standard that supports reuse of same data content in a variety of data structures

From a printed finding aid ...
Collection title: Mairzy Doats papers
Inclusive dates: 1928-1972

To the EAD-encoded version
<did><unittitle>Mairzy Doats papers</unittitle>
<unitdate normal="1928/1972">1928-1972</unitdate></did>
Overview of DACS

• DACS is output neutral (cont.)
  to the MARC21 version in WorldCat and your online catalog
245 10 $a Maizry Doats papers, $f 1928-1972
  to the collection reference in the MODS (Metadata Object
  Description Schema) record you’ve created for the digital
facsimile of Maizry’s 1958 letter to the Pope

<relatedItem type="host"/>
<titleInfo><title>Maizry Doats papers</title></titleInfo>
<originInfo><dateCreated>1928-1972</dateCreated></originInfo>

Overview of DACS

• DACS is …
  – An iterative standard
  – Designed to be used by U.S. archivists to capture and
    formulate descriptive information about groupings of
    archival and manuscript material (hereafter “archival
    materials”) in their current state of arrangement, or
    lack thereof
  • The information content for DACS elements can and will
    change as archival materials move through management
    stages within a repository
    → Acquisition → Processing → Use

Overview of DACS

• DACS is …
  – A standard that supports
  • Single level description
    – A MARC21 record
    – A preliminary accession record
    – A collection-level record in a repository’s collection
      management database
  • Multi-level description
    – A preliminary or full collection inventory or register (in print or
      encoded in EAD)
    – Multiple linked MARC21 records
    – A relational database collection record that encompasses two
      or more levels of description

Overview of DACS

• DACS is not …
  – A cookie-cutter approach to archival description
  • It frequently points out that an archivist’s professional
    judgment is a critical component of applying the standard in a
    given repository
  • It frequently offers advice on a variety of possible approaches
    and encourages archivists to pick an approach, consistently
    apply it, and document it
  • It offers minimum, optimum and added-value approaches to
    determining which elements of description to include in both
    single- and multi-level descriptions
  • As an archival professional, you and your local colleagues
    alone can determine how best to apply any standard within
    the context of your repository, its mission, its collections, and
    its primary users

Overview of DACS

• DACS is not …
  – One-stop shopping for archival description (see 2nd
    paragraph of the “Introduction to Describing Archival
    Materials” on p. 3)
  • You might use other content standards and thesauri for some
    elements, depending on the context of your work
    – LCNAF for the Name of Creator(s) element
    – AAT or TGM II For form and genre terms used in the Extent or
      Scope and Content elements
    – AACR2 for rules on transcribing formal titles that appear on
      some archival materials
    – (citations for all these standards can be found in appendix B in
      DACS)

Overview of DACS

• For example, your local processing & description manual might read
  as follows:
The AAT has the following scope note for the term Correspondence:
  “Any forms of addressed and written communication sent and
  received, including letters, postcards, memorandums, notes,
telegrams, or cables.”
Here at the XYZ Archives in our Scope and Content notes (DACS
  element 3.1) we always use “correspondence” when referring to any
  of the types of written communication indicated in the AAT scope
  note, with the exception of “picture postcards,” which we always
  specifically call out for our reference staff and the AAT defines as
  “Postcards having a pictorial image on one side.”
Overview of DACS

• Some examples …

• You might use rules from a more detailed, material-specific standard in lieu of DACS rules for specific elements if that form of material is particularly important for your repository
  – Rules for the Extent element from the IASA Cataloging Rules: A Manual for the Description of Sound Recordings and Related Audiovisual Media provide much more detail for item-level descriptions of sound recordings than DACS does – if that matters in your repository, you can use them instead of the DACS Extent Element (2.5) rules

• You might incorporate elements from other data structure standards at any level in your DACS-based descriptions
  – CCO provides elements (and rules for their content) for Style and for Culture that are beyond the scope of DACS and might be useful at the series or item levels to archivists describing cultural object components of the records of an individual or organization

• Finally, if certain formats of materials are a particular focus for your repository, you might abandon DACS altogether at the relevant level of description in a multilevel description in favor of a more format-specific standard
  – Use DACS for collection- series-, and file-level description for the bulk of your archival materials, but use Graphic Materials to describe a photographs series at the item level.

• In all cases, DACS encourages you to:
  – Take a well thought out, consistent approach repository-wide
  – Document your decisions about applications of standards

Overview of DACS

• Good definition of ARCHIVAL CONTROL from OCLC’s Bibliographic Formats and Standards:
  – "material is described according to archival descriptive rules, focusing on the contextual relationships between items [I’d prefer “units of materials” or something like that that didn’t appear to presume item-level control] and on their provenance rather than on bibliographic detail. All forms of material can be controlled archivally.”

• The upshot:
  – As long as your approach to controlling/describing your stuff is essentially archival in nature, you can base your descriptive practices on DACS and work outward from there.
  – “Archival” is an approach to managing information and NOT an essential characteristic of the material in question (it may be OLD, but …)

Overview of DACS

• Summary of principles on which DACS is based:
  – DACS can be used to create descriptions of all archival materials, whether “organically created, accumulated, and/or used by a person or organization in the conduct of affairs and preserved because of their continuing value” or “assembled intentionally by a person, organization, or repository because of a ‘common characteristic such as a particular subject, theme, or form.’”
  – Principle of respect des fonds is the basis for archival arrangement, which in turn serves as the basis for description; levels of description correspond to levels of arrangement
  – These rules can be used to describe all archival materials regardless of form or medium.
  – Archivists present archival descriptions at varying levels of detail and in a variety of outputs; nonetheless relationships between levels in a multi-level description must be clearly indicated, and information provided at each level of description must be appropriate to that level
  – The creators of the materials, as well as the materials themselves, must be described

DACS: Statement of Principles: The Nature of Archival Holdings

• Records in archives possess unique characteristics.
• The principle of respect des fonds is the basis of archival arrangement and description.

DACS: Statement of Principles: The Relationship between Arrangement and Description

• Arrangement involves the identification of groupings within the material.
• Description reflects arrangement.

• (Arrangement is faithful to creator, while Description serves user)
DACS: Statement of Principles: The Nature of Archival Description

- The rules of description apply to all archival materials regardless of form or medium.
- The principles of archival description apply equally to records created by corporate bodies, individuals, or families.

DACS: Statement of Principles: The Nature of Archival Description

- Archival descriptions may be presented at varying levels of detail to produce a variety of outputs.
  - Levels of description correspond to levels of arrangement.
  - Relationships between levels of description must be clearly indicated.
  - Information provided at each level of description must be appropriate to that level.

DACS: Statement of Principles: The Creators of Archival Material

- The creators of archival materials, as well as the materials themselves, must be described.

Overview of Archival Description

- Main Objective of Archival Description is to create Access Tools that aid users in discovering desired records.
  - Access Points
    - Natural language must be translated into a formal subject heading from standardized Resource (LCSH)
    - Permits faster and more precise searching
    - Names (creator, title, scope and content, bio, custodial history, immediate source of acquisition)
    - Places (creator, title, S&C, Bio)
    - Subjects (Title, S&C, Bio)
    - Documentary forms (Title, Extent, S&C)
    - Occupations (S&C, Bio)
    - Functions (Title, S&C, Bio)

Structure of DACS

- Statement of Principles
  - Basis for the rules in DACS
  - Explains the nature of Archival Material, the context in which they were created, and the need to reflect the relationship between records and the activities that generated them in the description.

Part I: Describing Archival Materials

- 25 elements for describing archival material
- Output neutral
- No required order of elements
- Levels of Description
  - Single-Level (describes material at one level only) and Multi-Level (must have a sublevel)
  - Description must meet minimum set of elements
  - Minimum, Optimum and Added Value
Multilevel Minimum

- Reference Code
- Name and Location of Repository
- Title
- Date
- Extent
- Name of Creator
- Scope and Content (brief)
- Conditions Governing Access
- Language and Scripts of the Material
- Identification of the whole-part relationship of top level to the next subsequent level.
- Each subsequent level should include all above elements unless the information is the same as that of a higher level.

Multilevel Optimum

- All elements in Minimum
- Administrative/Biographical History
- Scope and Content (full)
- Access Points
- Each subsequent level should include all elements at higher levels, and identification of the whole-part relationship to next level

Multilevel Added Value

- All elements in Multilevel optimum
- Any other elements the repository wishes to use

Data Element Rules in DACS

- Rules for each data element are numbered (2.5.1)
- For each element DACS provides:
  - Purpose and scope
  - Commentary
  - Exclusions
  - Sources of Information
  - General Rules
  - Example in EAD and MARC 21

Part II: Describing Creators

- 3 Steps to create documentation that establishes archival context
  - 1. Identifying Creators (Chapter 9) (2.6)
  - 2. Administrative/Biographical History (Chapter 10) (2.7)
  - 3. Authority Records (Chapter 11)
    - Put names in a standardized form to facilitate retrieval of information across descriptions, systems and institutions

Identifying Creators: Chapter 9

- Rules for determining which entities need to be documented as creators
- Names are also Access Points
- Creating this Access Point links all records by a particular person, etc. together
Authority Records: Chapter 11

- Based on ISAAR (CPF)

- 4 Types of Information:
  - Authoritative form of the name with reference to any variant forms (see Pt. 3)
  - History and Activities associated with the entity (see Chapter 10)
  - References to related persons, family, corporate bodies
  - Management information on the creation and status of the authority record

Part III: Forms of Names

- Rules for creating standardized forms of names
- Form of Names for Persons and Families (Chapter 12)
- Form of Geographic Names (Chapter 13)
- Form of Names for Corporate Bodies (Chapter 14)
- Follows AACR2 numbering in Chapters 22-24 respectively

ARCHIVAL DESCRIPTION USING DACS AND MARC21

- Archival description then is based on the principles cited above, and takes place through a primary vehicle called a finding aid.
- Originally typed paper inventories, finding aids have become sophisticated tools that describe the provenance and original order of a collection, and then divide the collection into naturally-occurring series.
- An archival series is a set of papers within a larger set—the papers of Ernest Hemingway might include at least two series: manuscripts by Hemingway, and correspondence with others.

ARCHIVAL DESCRIPTION USING DACS AND MARC21

- Once the finding aid has been constructed it can be made accessible in a variety of ways.
- Again, with great foresight in the late 1980s and early 1990s archivists created their own version of the MARC format to contain archival finding aids (or at least surrogates for them).
- These MARC records contained not only the preponderance of the content of the finding aid itself, but also carried added entries for material within a collection as well as subject headings to direct users to the collection. The input of vast quantities of these records into both OCLC and RLIN (but mostly RLIN) created at last an immense repository of both primary and secondary resources.
- A scholar could find side-by-side both the written record of the past and the raw resources upon which that record had been based. This was a huge leap forward for historical scholarship.