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Encoded Archival Context (EAC) is an XML-based encoding standard for describing creators of archival records, museum items, or bibliographic units. Based closely on ISAAR(CPF), the International Council on Archives standard for archival authority records, EAC allows archival repositories to create authority records that manage the various forms of names associated with a person, corporate body, or family, much like traditional bibliographic authority records do. However, EAC also allows for the inclusion of detailed and structured descriptive information about the entity being described. Furthermore, EAC records can be linked to descriptions of archival collections, bibliographic entities, and museum items related to the entity being described. Through interviews conducted with practicing archivists involved in the initial creation of EAC, as well as with North Carolina-area archivists involved in a pilot project to implement EAC on a state-wide basis, this study focuses on how EAC will change the way archivists perform authority work and creator description, how it will affect the user experience at archives, and how it may be implemented across repositories, libraries, and museums.

Headings:

Archives/Cataloging

Standardization/Cataloging

Coding systems

Authority Control

MORE THAN JUST A NAME: ARCHIVAL AUTHORITY CONTROL, CREATOR
DESCRIPTION, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENCODED ARCHIVAL CONTEXT (EAC)

by
Jesse F. Brown

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Roslyn Holdzkom

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Introduction

The theory and practice of archival description has changed tremendously over the past twenty-five years. The profession has evolved from one dominated by local descriptive practices, print finding aids, and no online access to record descriptions to one featuring well-defined content standards, finding aids that utilize Encoded Archival Description (EAD), and MARC descriptions that coexist with descriptions of bibliographic and other materials within library catalogs. The fruits of this transformation, in particular the advent of EAD, have attracted the attention of information professionals outside of the archival community, and have greatly enhanced the usability of archival repositories. With all of this effort, one might wonder what is next in the development of archival description.

The answer may very well lie in the recent creation of Encoded Archival Context, or EAC. EAC was developed by an international group of information professionals, and is currently in the beta stage of development. Similar in form to EAD, EAC is an XML-based encoding standard for archival authority records. EAC allows archival repositories to create authority records that manage the various forms of names associated with a person, corporate body, or family, much like traditional bibliographic authority records do. However, EAC also allows for the inclusion of detailed and structured descriptive information about the entity being described. Furthermore, EAC records can be linked to descriptions of archival collections, bibliographic entities, and museum items related to the entity being described. EAC contains the potential to redefine the concept of

authority control, and encourages the development of descriptive systems that better reflect the true nature of archival record creation. However, many questions need to be addressed if EAC is to become a standard that is embraced by the archival profession.

This paper hopes to address some of these questions. By interviewing archivists instrumental in the creation of EAC, as well as archivists currently using EAC in a pilot implementation project, this study endeavors to reach a greater understanding of the influences behind the development of EAC, as well as how EAC can change the way archivists perform authority work and creator description. In addition, the interview responses will address how EAC may be implemented among archival repositories; the likely response to EAC among libraries, museums, and other non-archival communities; and how the standard will affect the archival user's ability to meet his or her information needs. It is hoped that this study will encourage greater attention within the archival community to the possibilities and challenges inherent in the implementation of EAC.

Literature Review

Encoded Archival Context (EAC) represents the merger of two critical practices in the description of archival materials: authority control and creator description.

Authority control is the practice of establishing standard, or “authorized,” forms of names, titles, and subjects used in a descriptive record, and linking those authorized forms to other names, titles, or subject terms that users might search under. In the library profession, the idea of maintaining a list of authorized forms of name, or the forms of name chosen by a cataloger to represent the author of a work, dates back almost to the advent of library card catalogs. The basic functions of a library catalog implicitly mandate the maintenance of authorized forms of name.¹ Charles Cutter in 1876 first cited the purpose of a catalog as serving to “(1) locate a particular known item and (2) gather together or collocate a category of works.”² In order to fully achieve the finding and collocation functions, a library catalog system must be able to retrieve all of the works of a given author, even those published under a different name or form of name. Authority control allows users to find all of the pertinent records in a given catalog, regardless of the names and subject terminology used in the materials being described by the records.

¹ Robert H. Burger, “Authority Control,” in *Technical Services Management, 1965-1990: A Quarter Century of Change and a Look to the Future* (New York: Haworth Press, 1996), 105-118.

² Lisa B. Weber, “Development of Authority Control Systems Within the Archival Profession,” in *Archives and Authority Control: Proceedings of a Seminar Sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution, October 27, 1987*, ed. Avra Michelson. (Archives and Museum Informatics Technical Reports, no. 6), 35-39.

As the library catalog progressed from card-based systems to online public access catalogs (OPAC) using Machine-Readable Cataloging (MARC) records, the nature of authority control also changed. The online nature of MARC-based catalogs allowed for the sharing of bibliographic records across institutions. Cooperative ventures, such as OCLC and RLIN, allowed institutions to contribute their catalog records to centralized online catalogs. In order for such a catalog to work, the catalog records of each institution needed to share the same authorized forms of headings; otherwise, records concerning one author, title, or subject would not be completely collocated in a given search. As a result, standards were developed in the library community, in the form of the Anglo-American Cataloging Rules (AACR), that established rules for creating authorized forms of headings. In addition, the Library of Congress's Name Authority Cooperative program (NACO) allowed institutions to create and amend authority records in a centralized database, known as the Library of Congress Name Authority File (LCNAF).

While the library community was developing advanced standards for authority control, archivists were generally lagging behind. Archivists have traditionally felt that each collection of archival materials is unique, in its subject matter, physical form, and provenance. So for years archivists resisted applying standardized descriptive practices to their descriptive records; as a result, they felt no need to normalize the forms of name found in their descriptive finding aids. Eventually, however, archival professionals began to understand the value of having their collections represented in the same databases and OPACs as those used for bibliographic materials. In 1983, the MARC Format for Archives and Manuscript Control (MARC AMC), a revision of the existing MARC

encoding standard designed for the particular needs of archival description, was released along with *Archives, Personal Papers, and Manuscripts (APPM)*, a content standard similar in form to AACR, but focused more on the descriptive needs of archives and manuscript collections.³ *APPM*⁴ was subsequently replaced with a second edition⁵, containing extensive guidelines on creating authorized forms of headings, including name, uniform title, and subject headings, although the second edition of AACR was cited as the definitive source for information on headings.⁶ Thus, implicit in *APPM* was the recognition that, if their collections were to be found and collocated in catalogs along with bibliographic materials, archivists would need to perform the same authority work to which librarians had become accustomed.

Nevertheless, the actual practice of archivists in the years following the release of MARC AMC and *APPM* suggests that the application of bibliographic standards for authority control was far from uniform in the archival world. For instance, Vargas, in his 1994 study of the Milwaukee Urban Archives, found that only 15 percent of the names used in the repository's MARC records matched the authorized version of the name as stipulated by the Library of Congress.⁷ Some of this reluctance to perform authority work could certainly be explained by its cost, both in time and money. Vargas cited a 1986 Library of Congress study that found the monetary cost of each NACO authority

³ Kathleen D. Roe, *Arranging & Describing Archives & Manuscripts*, Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005: 38-39.

⁴ Steven L. Hensen, *Archives, Personal Papers, and Manuscripts: A Cataloging Manual for Archival Repositories, Historical Societies, and Manuscript Libraries* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1983).

⁵ *Archives, Personal Papers, and Manuscripts* has since been replaced by *Describing Archives: A Content Standard* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2004).

⁶ *Archives, Personal Papers, and Manuscripts: A Cataloging Manual for Archival Repositories, Historical Societies, and Manuscript Libraries*, compiled by Steven L. Hensen (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1989), viii.

⁷ Vargas, Mark A., "Do We Need Authority Control? Investigations at the Milwaukee Urban Archives," *Archival Issues* 19, no. 1 (1994): 45-51.

record created by a cataloging department to be \$14.67, and an RLIN study that showed authority work to be the second-greatest factor in impeding the creation of bibliographic records.

However, archival opposition to bibliographic authority control arose from more than mere financial concerns. Many archivists cited a continued incompatibility between traditional authority control practices and archival descriptive needs. In their eyes, authority control for creative entities was still conceptually rooted in the bibliographic world. As Steven Hensen, compiler of *APPM*, would note:

“...the cataloging of manuscripts is primarily a question of intellectual access with the catalog serving as a tool of reference and research and not of bibliographic description...The users of manuscript catalogs are less interested in the physical characteristics of the manuscript than in their context and content.”⁸

It is the archival user’s concern with context that is particularly relevant to archival authority control. For the archival user of a catalog or other descriptive system, the creator does not simply serve to provide a name that can be used to retrieve materials, as an author largely does in a library context. The creators of documents are the key to making sense of archival documents that are the evidence of past activities. Traditional archival description has recognized the need to record the contextual environment in which archival records are created, including the persons, corporate bodies, or families that were directly involved in their creation. The most recent American content standard for archival description, *Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACCS)*, cites creator description as a central archival principle, stating that:

“Since the principle of provenance is fundamental to the arrangement and description of archival materials, it follows that the provenance, or the creator(s),

⁸ Steven L. Hensen, “A modern theory of manuscript cataloging and the master record of manuscript collections.” Quoted in Weber, Lisa B., “Development of Authority Control Systems Within the Archival Profession,” 36.

of archival materials must be described as well...this means that the creator or collector of the materials must be identified and included in (or linked to) the description of the materials. Moreover, the functions or activities of the creator(s) that produced the archival materials must be described.”⁹

Information about this environment has usually been recorded in archival finding aids or inventories that describe the contents of an archival collection. This information usually appears in the beginning of the finding aid in the form of a biographical or historical note, thus presenting the contextual information to users before they read about the actual contents of the collection.¹⁰ While this information is vital for the accurate understanding of archival records, researching this information is time-consuming and costly for archival repositories. Also, if multiple collections share the same records creator, this research becomes repetitive, since each collection’s finding aid requires its own biographical or historical note.¹¹ Locating this contextual information in a single authority file about the record creator would eliminate much of the duplication and cost of biographical research. Thus, a truly *archival* view of authority control would combine this contextual information with the traditional establishment of authorized headings. According to this view, the limited practice of authority control in the archives world should be expanded to include the richer practice of *creator description*.

Beginning in the mid-1980’s, archivists began to test the possibility of creating systems that would make the marriage between authority control and creator description a reality. In 1985, the state archives of seven U.S. states (New York, California, Alabama, Minnesota, Utah, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania), along with the Research Libraries

⁹ Society of American Archivists, *Describing Archives: A Content Standard*. (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2004): xv.

¹⁰ Stefano Vitali, “Authority Control of Creators and the Second Edition of ISAAR(CPF), International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families,” *Cataloging and Classification Quarterly* 38, no. 3/4 (2004): 188.

¹¹ Alexander C. Thurman, “Metadata Standards for Archival Control: An Introduction to EAD and EAC,” *Cataloging and Classification Quarterly* 40, no. 3/4 (2005): 195.

Group, began a project that would use the existing Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN) to share archival description information encoded using the MARC AMC format. Entitled the Seven States Project, the effort undertook the MARC encoding of not only records description, but also corporate body histories and records denoting forms of material. These corporate body histories were created as “pseudo-bibliographic” descriptions, and were linked to series descriptions within the RLIN database.¹² Though the project did not get past the experimental level, it showed that there was value in maintaining detailed creator description files separate from records descriptions.

Meanwhile, other institutions were attempting to form their own systems for using archival authority records enhanced by creator description information. As part of an effort to overhaul its archives in preparation for the University’s 300th anniversary, the Yale University Archives set out to develop a database for capturing the administrative history of Yale University divisions. The archivists at Yale envisioned their database serving a greater purpose than simply providing contextual information. The database was also a crucial step in dismantling the record group system that Yale had used for decades to organize materials. This system had been arranged according to the structure of the University as it existed when the system was created. Over time, as the structure of the university changed; university divisions were merged, established, or dissolved; and functions were transferred between divisions, it was very difficult to manage the records of an evolving organization within a static record group system. In theory, linking collections of records to separately-maintained administrative descriptions,

¹² David Bearman, “Archives and Manuscript Control with Bibliographic Utilities: Challenges and Opportunities,” *American Archivist* 53 (1989): 33.

containing links to related divisions as well as descriptions of organizational and functional changes, would make it much easier to find and manage these records and understand the context of their creation. While Yale University Archives was unable to implement this system, through the participation of key Archives staff in the EAC working group (namely, Richard Szary and Michelle Light), the project would inform the early development of EAC.¹³

A major step toward the vision of archival creator description was made with the creation of the International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families, or ISAAR(CPF). ISAAR(CPF) was first published by the International Council of Archives (ICA) in 1996; a second edition was released in 2004. ISAAR(CPF) itself is closely related to another ICA initiative, the International Standard of Archival Description (General), or ISAD(G), which has focused on stating basic principles of the description of archival records according to a hierarchical organization proceeding from the collection (or *fonds*) level to the item level.¹⁴ ISAAR(CPF), in its second edition, provides a broad framework for the types of information that “could” be included in an archival authority record; therefore, the majority of the elements are optional. The only essential elements are the type of the entity being described, authorized forms of name for the entity, the dates of existence of the entity, and the identifier (or ID number) for the authority record itself.¹⁵ These elements generally represent the content of a traditional bibliographic authority record. However, the

¹³ Interview with Michelle Light.

¹⁴ Vitali, “Authority Control of Creators and the Second Edition of ISAAR(CPF), International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families,” 186.

¹⁵ International Council on Archives, *ISAAR(CPF): International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families, Second Edition* (Paris: International Council on Archives, 2004), 11.

framework, taken in its entirety, represents a significant transformation of the traditional ideal of authority control into the more expansive ideal of creator description.

ISAAR(CPF) contains four types of information. The “identity” section contains information on the authorized and variant forms of names for the entity being described.¹⁶ The “description” area contains descriptive information on the “history, roles, context, and activities” of the described entity.¹⁷ The “relationships” area provides information on how the entity is related to other corporate bodies, persons, or families that may also have authority records.¹⁸ The “control” area contains administrative information necessary for the maintenance of the authority record itself, as well as the descriptive rules and sources relevant to the information in the authority record.¹⁹ The second edition of ISAAR(CPF) also contains a section on relating the described entity to archival collections and other resources related to the entity, although this section is cursory in nature.²⁰

The “description” section is the part of the ISAAR(CPF) standard that represents the role of creator description in this new view of archival authority control. “Description” encompasses a broad range of individual descriptors that change according to whether the described entity is a person, corporate body, or family. They include the dates of existence, the functions and activities associated with the entity, the history of the entity, the internal structure (or genealogy) of the entity, and the overall context of the time in which the entity existed. The form of data to be included in these descriptors is

¹⁶ International Council on Archives, *ISAAR(CPF): International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families, Second Edition*, 11.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 16.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 22.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 25-28.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 29.

not specified; presumably, they can contain either narrative descriptions or controlled vocabulary terms.²¹ Furthermore, the “relationship” section suggests an even greater functionality for archival authority records. By establishing links to the authority records of other records creators, the ISAAR(CPF) record itself can be used as a research tool for identifying records creators that are related to a given topic.

Although ISAAR(CPF) was a major conceptual leap in the realm of archival authority and creator description, it did not specify a method for implementing its suggestions. In 1998, the Research Libraries Group sponsored a meeting at Yale University to deal with the issue of authority control in archives. Since one of the persons at that meeting, Wendy Duff from the University of Toronto, had been on the original committee for ISAAR(CPF), this standard played an integral part in the discussion. Nothing definitive came out of these discussions until 2000, when RLG received funding from the Delmas Foundation to continue the work started in the 1998 meeting. At a meeting in Toronto in 2001, a group of archivists, including Daniel Pitti, the main author of EAD, set out to create a data standard that would turn ISAAR(CPF) principles into a functional descriptive tool for archivists and other information professionals.²² The result of this effort would be Encoded Archival Context, or EAC.

The initial EAC working group consisted of archival description and information technology experts from institutions located around the world. The international input was considered crucial to ensuring that EAC would work with the unique descriptive standards of various national archival bodies. Soon after the initial meeting of the working group, a preliminary (alpha) version of EAC was released. This version was

²¹ International Council on Archives, *ISAAR(CPF): International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families, Second Edition*, 16-21.

²² Daniel Pitti, in discussion with the author, March 13, 2006.

tested and revised, and in 2004, a revised (beta) version of EAC was released, along with a “tag library” specifying what types of information went into each element of EAC.²³ This beta version is currently being tested and used by various implementation projects, toward the goal of releasing a completed version of EAC for the general archival community.

EAC is an XML-based document-type definition (DTD) for the markup of authority records. Because XML allows authors to “nest” elements, or <tags>, within other elements, EAC is organized as a hierarchical structure of “elements within elements,” thus mirroring the hierarchical organization of ISAAR(CPF).²⁴ Just as ISAAR(CPF) was related to a similar content standard for the description of archival records (ISAD(G)), EAC is closely related to Encoded Archival Description (EAD), another XML-based DTD for the markup of online finding aids describing archival records. Some of the members of the original EAC working group had been instrumental in the development of EAD. Therefore, to a certain extent, EAC complements EAD, and some of the syntax within the EAC elements mirrors that of EAD.²⁵

The groups of elements (or <tags>) contained in EAC map fairly closely to the four sections of ISAAR(CPF). The <eachheader> element contains information similar to the “control” section of ISAAR(CPF); therefore, it contains data necessary for the maintenance and control of the EAC record. This section also contains references to biographical sources and data content standards, such as *AACR* or *DACS*, that are cited in the creation of the EAC instance. The other main groups of EAC elements (<identity>,

²³ Daniel V. Pitti, “Creator Description: Encoded Archival Context,” *International Cataloguing and Bibliographic Control* 33, no. 2 (2004): 33.

²⁴ Thurman, “Metadata Standards for Archival Control: An Introduction to EAD and EAC,” 196.

²⁵ Pitti, “Creator Description: Encoded Archival Context,” 33.

<desc>, <eacrels>, <resourcerels>, and <funactrels>) are nested within the <condesc> element. The <identity> element is parallel to the “identity” section of ISAAR(CPF), and contains the authorized form of name for a given record creator, along with other variations of forms of name. EAC allows for the establishment of multiple authorized forms of name, which is particularly important for including forms of name established in other languages by other national authorities. The <desc> element maps closely to the “description” section of ISAAR(CPF), and contains descriptive information about the record creator. Some of the elements within <desc> require formal descriptive terms used in controlled vocabularies, such as the sex of the individual and the dates of his or her existence. Other elements allow for less formal, prose descriptions of the creator, comparable to what would be found in the biographical or historical note of an archival finding aid.²⁶

The “relationships” section of ISAAR(CPF) is represented in EAC by three different element groups. The <eacrels> group contains information on the relationships between the creator and other records creators that also have EAC records. Within these <eacrels> elements are attributes that allow the EAC record to designate the nature of the relationship between the records creators (i.e. “subordinate”, “superior”, “parent”, “child”). The <resourcerels> group contains information about archival collections, bibliographic units, and museum items that were created by, or in some way related to, the creator being described. Because this group contains machine-readable data, as well as text descriptions of resources, the EAC record can serve as a link to the resources

²⁶ Ad Hoc Encoded Archival Context Working Group. “Encoded Archival Context Tag Library, Working Draft,” 10 Aug. 2004, http://www.iath.virginia.edu/saxon/servlet/SaxonServlet?source=/eac/documents/tl_beta.xml&style=/eac/shared/styles/tl.xsl, (accessed 22 Jan. 2006).

being described within the <resourcerels> group.²⁷ Thus, rather than act as a “behind-the-scenes” support for the functions of resource description, like a traditional authority record, the EAC record can serve as an access point through which a user can find records related to the entity he/she is studying. The <funactrels> group contains controlled vocabulary terms describing functions or activities related to the entity being described. However, because standards for function and activity description have not yet been recognized, this group is minimally-structured, and not meant for implementation at the present time.²⁸

EAC offers many potential benefits to archival repositories and users, as well as to the overall information community. Daniel Pitti, one of the main contributors to the EAC working group, identifies three major benefits. First, the standardization of creator description and the maintenance of cooperative inter-institutional databases of EAC records can save repositories time and money, since the description of a single creator need not be duplicated among multiple institutions. Also, the separation of creator description from the description of archival collections represents a major step toward the division of the traditional archival finding aid into smaller, separately maintained, interconnected parts. These parts could be organized into descriptive systems that are more flexible and easier to maintain than current systems based on finding aids. Finally, EAC allows for a more accurate representation of the context, or provenance, of records creation. A given collection of documents can be the product of more than one creating entity, and each entity can create more than one collection of documents. However, the traditional finding aid only allows for a single record-creating entity to be associated with

²⁷ Ad Hoc Encoded Archival Context Working Group. “Encoded Archival Context Tag Library, Working Draft,” 10 Aug. 2004.

²⁸ Pitti, “Creator Description: Encoded Archival Context,” 36.

a single collection. By contrast, through the <resourcerels> section of EAC, each record creator can be associated with multiple archival collections and other resources. In addition, a collection description encoded in EAD can be linked to multiple EAC records, reflecting the complex nature of records creation.²⁹

In addition, EAC's benefits may extend beyond the archival community. Libraries, museums, and other cultural heritage professionals may also benefit from the enhanced creator description provided by EAC. A pilot project that exhibits the potential of some of these benefits is the Linking and Exploring Authority Files (LEAF) project. LEAF is a project funded by the European Union that has been engaged in setting up a model for a Central European Name Authority File.³⁰ This centralized solution would work by harvesting existing name authority records from libraries, archives, and other cultural institutions, then storing them as EAC records in a centralized database. Records relating to the same creator would be linked, and when a user would query the database for that creator, information from these records would be extracted and combined into a new EAC record, called a Shared Name Authority Record. This record would then be stored in another database. Because only the <eachheader> and <iidentity> element groups are required, EAC records can be used to store library authority records, which only contain information about authorized forms of name. Thus, the flexible design of EAC allows for authority records of varying complexity from different cultural institutions to reside together in a single reference tool. The potential benefits of this collocation for users are enormous.

²⁹ Pitti, "Creator Description: Encoded Archival Context," 33-34.

³⁰ Jutta Weber, "LEAF: Linking and Exploring Authority Files," *Cataloging and Classification Quarterly* 38, no. 3/4 (2004): 229.

Nevertheless, as EAC continues to be developed and tested, certain issues will have to be addressed. For instance, while EAC promises to save institutions time and money associated with the duplication of creator description efforts, there will be significant costs associated with the initial implementation of EAC. Staff will need fairly extensive training in both the theory behind creator description and the practical application of the EAC DTD. If the learning curve many archival professionals faced when first implementing EAD is any clue, then the diffusion of EAC may be slow and problematic. Yakel and Kim's 2005 study of archival repositories that sent employees to EAD training workshops found that only 42% of these repositories ended up implementing EAD. Among the reasons given for not adopting EAD were the small staff sizes of many of the repositories, as well as the incompatibility of EAD with existing description practices.³¹ For many institutions, EAC is likely to require as great a change in archival description practices as did EAD. Those involved in advocating the implementation of EAC will need to plan for this likely conflict, and develop tools and instructions that will make the implementation process easier, particularly for smaller institutions.

In addition, uncertainties still exist concerning how attractive EAC will be to those outside the archival community. As noted above, libraries traditionally limit their name authority work to establishing authorized and variant forms of name for a given creator. While the enhanced creator description offered by EAC certainly adds detail to authority records, it remains to be seen whether libraries will perceive this added detail as being valuable in the context of bibliographic description. Furthermore, because EAC is

³¹ Elizabeth Yakel and Jihyun Kim, "Adoption and Diffusion of Encoded Archival Description," *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 56, no. 13 (2005): 1427-1437.

still in development, and has not yet resulted in usable tools, there has been no opportunity to gain user feedback about whether or not EAC enhances their overall research experience. While user testing is undoubtedly inevitable, those information professionals involved in testing and amending EAC must be able to consider issues likely to be of concern to the users of EAC, including the searchability of EAC records and the level of explication required for users to understand the terminology related to EAC fields.

The present study attempts to address these concerns by interviewing archivists involved in the original creation and development of the EAC standard, as well as archivists involved in NCEAC, a pilot implementation of the standard in North Carolina. The study is structured to explore the thoughts of two distinct groups of archivists, both of which are or have been actively engaged with EAC development and/or implementation, on how EAC can address these issues. Furthermore, the study aims to provide an update on EAC's present state of development, and to determine how EAC will likely develop, both in the information profession as a whole and within individual institutions. This study will address the following questions:

- Q.1) How have the collaborative natures of both the initial EAC Working Group and the nascent NCEAC group affected the creation and planned implementation of EAC?
- Q.2) Will EAC be implemented readily by archival repositories, or are there obstacles to its ease in implementation?
- Q.3) How will EAC affect the authority control and creator description practices currently held by archival repositories?
- Q.4) Will EAC become a standard that is embraced by the library and museum communities, as well as by the archival community that has largely been behind its development?
- Q.5) How will EAC affect the user experience in archival repositories?

Methodology

This study involved ten subjects, who were chosen due to their participation in either one of two working groups: 1) the original EAC working group that developed the EAC DTD, or 2) NCEAC, a working group of North Carolina archivists who are implementing EAC on a statewide basis. Emails were sent to the entire memberships of both the original EAC working group and the NCEAC group in order to determine interest in participating in the study. Five subjects from each group were selected based on their expressed interest in the study. Each of the subjects was sent an electronic copy of the consent form (Appendix C) within the initial email, which they were asked to print out, sign, and return to the author. The consent form included a section where the participant could signify if they agreed to allow their name and the name of their institution to be mentioned in the final report of the study. Each of the participants agreed to this stipulation in the consent form.* Once consent forms from ten participants were received, a second email was sent to each confirmed participant setting the scheduled interview time.

The interview subjects for this study included the following archivists who had worked with the original EAC working group:

- Michelle Light, University of Washington
- Per-Gunnar Ottoson, National Archives (Riksarkivet) of Sweden.
- Daniel Pitti, Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities, University of Virginia.

* One of the participants failed to note on the consent form whether she wanted to be mentioned in the study. Verbal consent to use her name and the name of her institution was received and recorded at the beginning of the phone interview.

- Kathleen Roe, New York State Archives
- Dick Sargent, National Register of Archives, United Kingdom.

Also included were the following archivists who have participated in the NCEAC

working group:

- Ruth Bryan, Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Special Collections Library, Duke University.
- Todd Kosmerick, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University.
- Natalia Lonchyna, North Carolina Museum of Art.
- Steven Mandeville-Gamble, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University.
- Druscilla Simpson, North Carolina State Archives.

Each subject participated in a semi-structured phone interview, lasting 30 minutes to one hour. The interviews were guided by two lists of questions, one list for each working group's members. Both sets of questions addressed the concerns listed in the research questions, but were different in the range of expertise required of the participants. The questions asked of the original EAC working group participants addressed the broader issues of EAC as an international standard, whereas the questions asked of the NCEAC members focused more on how EAC will affect their own institutions' creator description practices. These two sets of questions allowed the study to address the potential impact of EAC on both local and global levels.

The interviews were taped using a digital voice recorder. After the interviews were completed, the author reviewed the recorded interviews to identify main points made by the participants, and to address the research questions stated in the rationale.

Findings

All of the participants in these interviews evinced a great deal of enthusiasm for the potential of EAC to become a valuable tool for archival repositories. As all of the interviewees were people who had been actively involved in creating or implementing EAC, this hardly comes as a surprise. Both the original EAC working group and the NCEAC group have been able to tap into a community of archivists concerned about archival description. This community, which has gained experience working in collaborative projects such as ISAD(G) and EAD, was able to apply the lessons learned in creating and implementing those standards to the conceptualization of EAC.

EAC and NCEAC Working Groups - The Fruits of Collaborative Effort

The EAC working group was made up of archivists from several nations, including the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Sweden. This international involvement in EAC's early development stood in contrast to the origins of EAD, which was developed primarily within the United States and Canada, and only later gained attention and acceptance from archivists outside of North America. As mentioned before, the international nature of the working group allowed for different descriptive standards and traditions to be represented within the group. Due to this international participation, the working group members felt less pressure to make EAC conform to the prescriptive rules of a single national bibliographic organization, such as the Library of Congress.

The diversity of the EAC working group, both in nationality and in type of institution represented, played a large role in one of the most innovative aspects of EAC, namely, its potential to divide the traditional archival finding aid into smaller, interconnected parts, so that multiple creators can be associated with a single collection of records. Per-Gunnar Ottoson, of the Riksarkivet in Sweden, noted that the non-American archivists in the group tended to have more experience with archival descriptive systems than with relational databases. In his words,

I'd compare it to American archivists, [who] are more used to seeing archival description as a document, or [in a] library system with MARC records, but not working with relational databases with many to many relations between persons, corporate bodies and descriptions. That was an experience that we brought.³²

Daniel Pitti also added that this experience with relational databases was shared by archivists from large governmental archives in both the United States and in other countries, who were also represented in the working group.³³ Thus, it was easy for the group to conceptualize an encoding standard that allows for each EAC record to be linked to multiple record descriptions, and to be linked to numerous other EAC instances.

Another key element of the EAC working group's collaborative work was the inclusion of archivists who served on the committee to revise ISAAR(CPF). Fortuitously, the initial meetings of the EAC working group coincided with the ICA's scheduled five-year review of ISAAR(CPF)³⁴. It had become generally accepted within the archival community that the first version of ISAAR(CPF) did not completely meet the authority control and creator description needs of archivists. Dick Sargent, who served on both the ISAAR(CPF) and the EAC groups, noted that the original version of

³² Per-Gunnar Ottoson, in discussion with the author, March 7, 2006.

³³ Daniel Pitti, in discussion with the author, March 13, 2006.

³⁴ Ibid.

ISAAR(CPF) prescribed different types of authority records for corporate bodies, persons, and families. This proved to be confusing and redundant, since many of the fields were shared among the three types of records. In addition, the relationship section of ISAAR(CPF), which dictated how relationships between the creator and other records creators, record collections, bibliographic items, or museum items were to be represented, was not well-defined in the first edition.³⁵ Other archivists noted that the “identity” section of ISAAR(CPF), first edition was still wedded to the bibliographic principle of the single authorized form of name, with other forms of name entered as variants. This was seen as incompatible with the archival concept of creator description, in which the entity is described throughout its life-cycle, possibly involving many changes of name.³⁶ In addition, the single authorized form of name undercut the international nature of ISAAR(CPF), since an authority record maintained across national borders should allow for multiple forms of name in different languages representing the same entity. Five members of the EAC working group (Dick Sargent, Per-Gunnar Ottoson, Gavan McCarthy, Adrian Cunningham, and Stefano Vitali) also served on the ICA Committee on Descriptive Standards, which was charged with creating the second edition of ISAAR(CPF).³⁷ Therefore, the revision of ISAAR(CPF) directly informed the development of EAC, and, in return, the concepts that arose from the EAC working group affected the course of ISAAR(CPF). One key benefit of this collaboration was

³⁵ Dick Sargent, in discussion with the author, March 10, 2006.

³⁶ Michelle Light, in discussion with the author, March 6, 2006.

³⁷ International Council on Archives, *ISAAR(CPF): International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families, Second Edition*, 6.

that, unlike EAD, which had to be revised considerably after the revised edition of ISAD(G) was released, EAC would adhere closely to ICA standards.³⁸

This spirit of collaboration among archivists of different backgrounds was also evident within the NCEAC working group, a group of North Carolina information professionals that was convened in December of 2005 to create and test a prototype for a statewide authority record database using EAC. This group consists of archivists from the major research universities in the Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill area (North Carolina State University, Duke University, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), project librarians from NC ECHO (a digitization initiative run through the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources), and professionals from the North Carolina State Archives and the North Carolina Museum of Art. The participants are diverse in experience level, from current library science students to those with decades of experience in their given fields. As of the writing of this paper, the NCEAC group was working on creating best practice guidelines for the creation of EAC records, based on the creation of sample EAC records. The group was also creating a web form that would provide fields for entering correct authority and creator description data, and that would allow for the automatic generation of encoded records.

The varying perspectives offered in this working group have been cited by its members as being very helpful in enriching their conception of what EAC can accomplish within the NCEAC project. The participants brought with them experiences with different user groups. For instance, those working in government or institutional archives had a great deal of experience serving “interior” users, or users affiliated with the parent institution or government body that the collection documents. These users had

³⁸ Dick Sargent, in discussion with the author, March 10, 2006..

differing expectations concerning the structure of information within EAC.³⁹ In addition, an archivist from the North Carolina State Archives provided valuable input on functional descriptions used within governmental archives. In addition, the group benefited from the input of archivists involved in national and international archival description standards. This input allowed the group to be mindful of how its implementation of EAC would relate to broader national systems such as the Library of Congress Name Authority File.⁴⁰

It is interesting to note the variety of uses that the group members foresee for the final NCEAC implementation. Todd Kosmerick, University Archivist for North Carolina State University (NCSU), became interested in EAC primarily as a source for shared biographical information. At the time of this writing, NCSU Special Collections Research Center staff was working on creating EAC records for important people involved in the development of North Carolina State's Centennial campus for the Centennial Campus Documentation Project. Interestingly, some of the people for whom he is creating EAC records are not necessarily record creators within his institution; however, he is including them in order to develop a more complete historical picture of the campus's founding.⁴¹

Another unique perspective comes from Natalia Lonchyna, the librarian for the North Carolina Museum of Art. Ms. Lonchyna became interested in EAC when she was searching for ways to make the library's vertical files on North Carolina artists more accessible to the public. These files, which include exhibition announcements, brochures, and other ephemeral documentation, are particularly useful for providing

³⁹ Ruth Bryan, in discussion with the author, March 15, 2006.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Todd Kosmerick, in discussion with the author, March 8, 2006.

information on lesser-known artists who may not be represented in traditional biographical sources. Initially, Ms. Lonchyna intended to produce a print biographical dictionary, but was instead persuaded of the value of maintaining an online database of artist biographies. When searching for a viable software solution for this project, she found out about the NCEAC project, and realized that it offered a well-organized skeleton for storing information from the vertical files in a way that made it a rich and easily searched resource. Although the biographical information from the museum's vertical files does not constitute authority records *per se*, Ms. Lonchyna sees the value in having her information on artists in the same database as records of creators in archives.⁴²

The Challenges and Opportunities Involved in Implementing EAC

One of the main challenges of implementing any new technological standard is the amount of education and training required of professionals who are interested in applying that standard. This is no less true in the case of EAC. First, although the authority standard from which EAC is derived, ISAAR(CPF), is an internationally recognized standard, its application to the authority control practices of individual institutions has been spotty at best. In fact, of the five NCEAC participants interviewed in this study, none of them were familiar with the ISAAR(CPF) standard. Therefore, in many cases, educating information professionals about EAC will involve introducing an entirely new concept of archival authority work, a concept that some may find difficult to understand and somewhat outside the normal parameters of their daily work.

One way around this difficulty may be to “bundle” EAC with other descriptive tools to form products that can provide an integrated system of description for archival materials. One example of such a system is CALM, a product of the British software

⁴² Natalia Lonchyna, in discussion with the author, March 7, 2006.

firm DS Limited. Increasingly popular among British repositories, Calm consists of “modules” that address different aspects of archival description. In a recent edition of CALM, Dick Sargent worked with DS Limited to create an archival authority module that was compliant with ISAAR(CPF) guidelines. Although CALM is built on a relational database and does not use XML encoding, one could easily envision EAC being used within such an integrated system. One main advantage of partnering with software firms such as DS Limited is that these firms often provide in-depth training for their customers in the use of their products. This kind of training would lessen the need for archival organizations to fund their own training programs for EAC. In the United States, a similar product is being developed in the form of the Archivist Toolkit, a collaborative project involving multiple libraries and archives and funded by the Mellon Foundation. The Toolkit involves a description module in which name authority records compliant with ISAAR(CPF) would be included.⁴³ While it is uncertain whether the Toolkit will specifically use EAC as the encoding standard for these authority records, such an inclusion would greatly increase the distribution and ease of implementation of EAC, and would emphasize its place within a multi-faceted descriptive system.

In addition, technology could be leveraged to ensure that those who used an EAC-based database would not have to actually deal with the EAC code directly. This approach is currently being developed by the NCEAC group, which is working on a web-based input form that archivists can use to enter authority data into the NCEAC database. The web form will state explicitly what type of information must go into each descriptive field. When the information is submitted, an EAC record will be automatically generated

⁴³ Archivists’ Toolkit Project, “Archivists’ Toolkit Specification: Name Functional Area,” August 4, 2005, <http://archiviststoolkit.org/ATspecification/names-pub.pdf>, (accessed April 6, 2006).

from the data provided by the user. Thus, institutions can contribute to the authority database without having to know anything about the specific EAC tags. Many of the NCEAC members interviewed indicated that the ease of use of this web-based data entry form will largely determine the extent to which they can integrate EAC into their institutional workflow. The web form is sure to be even more critical in attracting the contributions of records from smaller archival repositories or cultural heritage institutions, which are less likely to have persons on their staff with the technical expertise to directly manipulate EAC encoding.

Another uncertainty surrounding the adoption of EAC is the degree to which EAC will result in authority control databases that operate on a national, or even international level, or whether they will be limited to regional, or even institutional, implementations. Some of the archivists interviewed believe that EAC provides a unique opportunity to share authority data on an international level, and possibly to create an international tool for accessing record descriptions. As Per-Gunnar Ottoson notes:

“I would say that the only possibility for getting international search engines for archives is that we are working with these concepts in EAC. We have different traditions in describing archives, and that is very much dependent on language and culture. But when it comes to record creators, it is much easier to agree on (the substance?), and also [easier] to exchange information.”⁴⁴

In addition, Daniel Pitti points to the aforementioned LEAF project as evidence of the technological feasibility for creating international authority resources. In his words:

“I think that they demonstrated pretty well that you could take descriptions from a wide variety of sources and subsume them into a centralized database. And I think that, in itself, makes a big technical, intellectual and political statement, because it demonstrates the feasibility of this (international databases). If you can gather the resources and conjure up a bit of goodwill, you can do some pretty interesting things.”

⁴⁴ Per-Gunnar Ottoson, in discussion with the author, March 7, 2006.

However, Mr. Pitti is also quick to point out that there are many linguistic, cultural, and political hurdles to overcome before any such international exchange can even be postulated.⁴⁵

There was more enthusiasm among the archivists interviewed about the possibility of national authority control databases based on EAC. In fact, two of the archivists interviewed are currently working on such national databases. Dick Sargent's work for the National Archives in the United Kingdom centers on the National Registry of Archives, a database of private papers holdings throughout the United Kingdom. He is currently working on creating a National Name Authority File for British archives, which will take creator descriptions from the National Registry of Archives and other catalogs and encode them in EAC.⁴⁶ Likewise, at the Riksarkivet in Sweden, Per-Gunnar Ottoson is currently involved in a similar national authority file project for Swedish archives.⁴⁷ Interestingly, both of these projects are currently focused on populating their respective databases with the names of record creators, rather than on providing contextual information for those creators. Some of the records in the UK's National Name Authority File will contain links to creator descriptions from online biographical and historical resources, including the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography; however, the formal descriptive elements of EAC will not be utilized.⁴⁸ In both of these cases, descriptive depth has been sacrificed to ensure the widest possible coverage of record creators. However, it is possible that such national projects, if they can all commit to

⁴⁵ Daniel Pitti, in discussion with the author, March 13, 2006.

⁴⁶ Dick Sargent, in discussion with the author, March 10, 2006.

⁴⁷ Per-Gunnar Ottoson, in discussion with the author, March 7, 2006.

⁴⁸ Dick Sargent, in discussion with the author, March 10, 2006.

using EAC, and if funding is available, could eventually lead to cooperative creator descriptionl initiatives across national boundaries, if and when funding is available.

Despite the promise evinced by these pioneering endeavors, there are significant obstacles to any implementation of EAC, both at the national and local levels. For instance, any national implementation would have to take into account the primacy of the Library of Congress Name Authority File. Some larger archival institutions in the United States, particularly those that reside within the library systems of major universities, are heavily invested in LCNAF and participate actively in NACO.⁴⁹ These institutions are not likely to stop using LCNAF, since they place a high value on having their online record descriptions coexist with library catalog records. Therefore, any effort these institutions would put into an EAC-based creator description database would have to be done in addition to the work they already put into LCNAF.

In addition, one interviewee expressed the opinion that the readiness of an institution to adopt EAC may be tied to the extent to which it has used EAD, the XML structural standard for finding aids. Michelle Light, of the University of Washington, notes that EAC is particularly attractive for the potential to link descriptions of creators to descriptions of collections in EAD. However, many institutions have lacked the technical expertise necessary to fully take advantage of the versatility of EAD; instead, they have simply used EAD to create online finding aids that closely mimic the print finding aids they have produced in the past. In addition, institutional priorities often affect the number of finding aids produced in a repository. Some institutions will choose to describe many collections at a basic level, while others will choose to describe fewer collections in more detail. Ms. Light notes that,

⁴⁹ Michelle Light, in discussion with the author, March 6, 2006.

“I’ve gotten to the point at the University of Washington where we can spend forever getting our legacy records perfect in EAD...I’ve reached the point where I’m going to put our basic information in EAD, [the type of information] we have in catalog records, and then scan finding aids as PDF’s and attach them [to the EAD records] just to get the information out there.”

According to Ms. Light, it will be difficult for institutions to justify the time and expense involved in implementing EAC when they have yet to produce basic finding aids, since converting local authority systems into EAC only makes sense when there is a critical mass of EAD finding aids to which they can be linked.⁵⁰ In a sense, the popularity of EAD among archival institutions is both an asset and a drawback for the future implementation of EAC. On one hand, EAD has introduced archivists to an XML-based standard; therefore, archivists are less likely to be intimidated by EAC coding. In addition, although EAD is not a data content standard (that is, it does not prescribe the type of information that should be in a finding aid), its structure has encouraged greater standardization of records description. Thus, archivists who use EAD may be more amenable to the degree of standardization that an EAC database would require. On the other hand, it will be difficult to convince institutions that are already devoting time and resources to intensive EAD conversions of legacy finding aids to devote additional time to integrating EAC into their workflow.

Ultimately, a major obstacle to any implementation of EAC, on the international, national, or local level will be funding. Much of the funding for projects that are testing EAC’s feasibility is periodic in nature. They typically come in the form of grants that last for only a few years. Therefore, while projects such as LEAF have shown the potential of EAC to improve access to creator description, they have not had the long-term financial backing necessary to create permanent databases. While the

⁵⁰ Michelle Light, in discussion with the author, March 6, 2006.

aforementioned national efforts appear to be reversing that trend, they are still dependent on the funding commitments of government agencies, commitments that can change over time. Similar challenges face the NCEAC project. Ruth Bryan notes that:

“NC ECHO really only operates properly because we have a person coordinating us...If there is nobody whose job it is to actually coordinate EAC, I’m not sure how it will continue to live...What I’m talking about is going to require a commitment on the part of the individual institutions planning on participating in NCEAC that I think is probably not going to be sustainable.”⁵¹

Although there are considerable challenges involved in implementing EAC, the interviewees all felt that there were many aspects of EAC that could make the descriptive burden for archival repositories much easier to bear. In particular, EAC allows archivists to avoid duplication of effort in creator description. Kathleen Roe, archivist at the New York State Archives, provides a particularly vivid depiction of the problem that EAC is meant to solve:

“The normal archival technique, when I started in the profession...was to create a historical/biographical note [for each finding aid]. Well, that’s okay if you have a finding aid for one person, family, or organization and you’re never going to get records from them again. That doesn’t happen with government records. I have six hundred series from the State Education Department; probably, another thirty or forty will come in. You can’t repeat that historical note four hundred or five hundred times without it being pretty obvious it’s a big waste of time and energy.”⁵²

In this situation, linking each series description to an EAC record for the given agency would obviously lead to an enormous savings of time and resources. In addition, the fact that only the identity section of EAC (the section related to name authority control) is required for a valid EAC record allows repositories that are unable to devote the time to

⁵¹ Ruth Bryan, in discussion with the author, March 15, 2006.

⁵² Kathleen Roe, in discussion with the author, March 17, 2006..

extensive creator description to be able to contribute at least minimal information to an EAC implementation.⁵³

EAC's Effect on Descriptive Practices

EAC promises to fundamentally change archival description as it is practiced in many archival institutions. The division of the traditional archival finding aid into separate sections for creator description and records description allows for a more flexible descriptive system that more accurately depicts the multi-relational nature of records provenance. While some would argue that intensive creator description is foreign to archival repositories, others see this as a rediscovery of a long-established archival tradition of creator description. As Per-Gunnar Ottoson notes:

“With the old finding aids here at our archives (the Riksarkivet), they usually start with a very long administrative history of a government agency; if it’s private papers, [they] start with a long biography. So it is a tradition that [creator description] is done the more systematic way.”⁵⁴

Likewise, when asked about how EAC would be integrated into their institutional workflow, most of the NCEAC members interviewed in this study expressed confidence that the use of EAC would be an extension, rather than a radical revision, of what their institutions currently do for creator description. Steven Mandeville-Gamble’s view was typical of his fellow NCEAC participants when he stated:

“What I am envisioning is that our technical services staff, as they are processing collections, as they are gathering the information for the “bioghist” (biographical or historical note), will, in fact, concatenate all the information that we would want, and put it into an EAC record...I don’t see it as fundamentally different from what we are doing now. I actually think it will be a refinement of what we are doing now.”⁵⁵

⁵³ Per-Gunnar Ottoson, in discussion with the author, March 7, 2006.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Steven Mandeville-Gamble, in discussion with the author, March 8, 2006.

In essence, the creator description information found in the EAC record is the same type of information found in the biographical and historical note of an EAD-encoded finding aid, but, in an EAC record, that information is structured in a way that allows it to be searched by various fields (e.g. by sex, birthplace, incorporation date, or function). Thus, while EAC certainly represents a major leap in the functionality of archival description, it may not be as much of a conceptual leap as some archivists might think (or fear).

Nevertheless, some of the individuals interviewed seemed skeptical about entirely relying on the EAC record for contextual information. Some felt that their institutions would continue to place creator descriptive information into a biographical or historical note within the finding aid of a given collection, particularly when that descriptive information is directly related to the collection at hand. Druscilla Simpson, of the North Carolina State Archives, predicts that:

“We will still integrate some [contextual] information that is pertinent to the collection that we are describing and that we glean out of the collection. And then we may or may not submit that [information] to be added to the authority file, [depending on] if we feel that the information is pertinent only to that collection.”⁵⁶

Others predict that they will do away entirely with the biographical or historical note in their finding aids, and will rely entirely on a link to the EAC record for the collection’s creator. These archivists assert that including additional contextual information in the record description would, in most cases, be a waste of time.⁵⁷ Another interviewee felt that his institution would combine these approaches by creating and linking its finding aids to EAC records, then copying information from the EAC record back into the

⁵⁶ Druscilla Simpson, in discussion with the author, March 15, 2006.

⁵⁷ Kathleen Roe, in discussion with the author, March 17, 2006.

finding aid.⁵⁸ In addition, there seemed to be a lack of a common conceptual understanding of the function of an EAC record. Some participants seemed to view it primarily as a reference tool for archivists to refer to when creating record descriptions, while others saw it primarily as an access point from which record descriptions could be linked.

Part of the reluctance to rely on the EAC record as the sole source of biographical information for the collection may come from a particular understanding of the rules for archival description prescribed by content standards such as *Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACCS)*. Traditionally, these standards have emphasized that contextual information included in a finding aid should be relevant to the materials that the institution holds. Some institutions, as a result, may be reluctant to link to an EAC record that includes a great deal of contextual information that is not directly relevant to that institution's particular collection.⁵⁹ However, it should be noted that, at least within the American archival community, the authoritative content standard for archival description, DACS, is greatly informed by the ISAAR(CPF) standard for archival authority records. DACS includes a chapter devoted to creating ISAAR(CPF) compliant authority records, and throughout its guidelines on creator description, it emphasizes the applicability of the guidelines to both information included within record descriptions and to separate authority records.⁶⁰ As DACS becomes more widely adopted by archival repositories in the United States, the concepts behind separately maintained authority

⁵⁸ Steven Mandeville-Gamble, in discussion with the author, March 8, 2006..

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Society of American Archivists, *Describing Archives: A Content Standard*, Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2004, 93-118.

records may become better understood by archivists, and may lead to greater willingness to rely on a shared authority record resource for their creator description needs.

Another archivist interviewed noted that each repository will have to decide how much it will rely on EAC as an authoritative source of biographical data, rather than relying on the records themselves, or relying on published resources.⁶¹ The degree to which a shared authority record database will be trusted as a reliable source of biographical data will largely be determined by the work of those charged with maintaining the database and how much editorial control they exercise over the EAC records contributed by institutions.

Libraries and Museums: Will They Participate?

EAC has primarily been developed by and for the archival community. Much of its development, indeed, has been spurred by the belief among archivists that traditional bibliographic methods of authority control used by the library community do not meet the creator description needs of archival repositories. However, both the ISAAR(CPF) standard and EAC are constructed in a way that could be useful for both the library and museum communities. As noted before, the “identity” section of EAC handles forms of name in a way that allows conformity with Library of Congress and AACR2 standards for authorized names. In addition, the “relationships” section of EAC allows for relations to be defined between the creator being described and bibliographic materials, as well as between the creator and related museum items. With the input of the library and museum communities, EAC could become a tremendously powerful tool for providing access to the full range of documentary evidence related to a single person, corporate body, or family.

⁶¹ Ruth Bryan, in discussion with the author, March 15, 2006..

Nevertheless, initial contacts made by this study's interviewees with librarians have yielded mixed results. Interestingly, both of the non-American archivists interviewed reported significant interest from their respective countries' library communities. Per-Gunnar Ottoson noted that librarians in his country were able to see that EAC's "identity" section was compatible with their existing authority records. In addition, most of the participants in the aforementioned LEAF project were librarians, and many of the records included in that project were contributed by libraries.⁶² Dick Sargent adds that quite a few librarians and museum professionals in Great Britain have expressed interest, which may lead to promising projects using EAC.

However, other librarians have noticed much more skepticism among professionals from outside of the archival community with whom they have discussed EAC. After stating flatly that he believes that librarians will be "horrified" when confronted with EAC, Steven Mandeville-Gamble notes that catalogers he has talked to have expressed many reservations about EAC, and that they did not appreciate the added creator description functionality that EAC provided. Essentially, they did not see how EAC would represent an improvement over the traditional bibliocentric authority control practices in which they already engage, including the reliance on LCNAF. He also found that catalogers were uncomfortable with the flexibility that EAC allows in terms of the amount of information included in a record, as opposed to the more rigidly-controlled descriptive fields found in the MARC-based LCNAF.⁶³

There are many other concerns that discourage substantial library involvement in EAC initiatives. Librarians might feel that the enhanced creator description that EAC

⁶² Per-Gunnar Ottoson, in discussion with the author, March 7, 2006..

⁶³ Steven Mandeville-Gamble, in discussion with the author, March 8, 2006.

allows would be too costly to implement in a library setting.⁶⁴ While EAC does not require the use of the description and relationship elements, such concern might make it less likely that librarians will see value in implementing EAC when they are already involved in NACO or LCNAF. In addition, the tradition of bibliographic cataloging has not emphasized enhanced description of either items or authors. Librarians have been able to assume that readers will look at the table of contents, or scan a few pages of a given book, and be able to determine its relevancy to their information needs.⁶⁵ Therefore, the enhanced descriptive elements of EAC may seem superfluous to librarians.

Most of the interview subjects seemed more sanguine about the possibility of involvement from the museum community. Ruth Bryan notes that, since many in the museum community do not have access to established authority structures, they may be quite interested in participating in an EAC project that provides such structures for them. Indeed, although art museums have generally used the Union List of Artist's Names (ULAN) maintained by the Getty Museum, other types of museums have not been able to construct similar resources. This lack of authority control practice, however, could be a challenge, since museum professionals who want to use EAC will likely have to be trained in the principles of authority control itself, and not simply with the specific EAC implementation. Also, while the participation of the North Carolina Museum of Art in the NCEAC project displays some of the potential contributions that museum professionals can make to an EAC implementation, very few museum professionals are familiar with the standard.⁶⁶ Clearly, a great deal of effort must be undertaken by

⁶⁴ Michelle Light, in discussion with the author, March 6, 2006.

⁶⁵ Ruth Bryan, in discussion with the author, March 15, 2006.

⁶⁶ Natalya Lonchyna, in discussion with the author, March 7, 2006.

proponents of EAC if they want to ensure the participation of professionals outside of the archival community.

EAC's Effect on the User Experience in Archives

So far, this report has focused on how EAC may be useful to archivists and other information professionals in the context of their institutional descriptive efforts.

However, the ultimate justification for any new descriptive tool must be the extent to which it aids archives users in meeting their information needs. So far, most of the effort surrounding EAC has been devoted to creating functional implementations, and there has been little opportunity for user testing of these implementations.

Nevertheless, all of the professionals interviewed for this study agreed that EAC would improve the overall user experience in an archival repository. Some interviewees focused on EAC's ability to link creator descriptions to multiple records descriptions from different repositories. Although resources such as the National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections in the United States allow users to search for record collections across repositories, the descriptions offered in these resources are minimal. The user must still take the extra step of visiting the repository's website to access an online finding aid, or visiting the repository to view a print finding aid. With the ability to link to finding aids, bibliographic catalog records, and other descriptive tools, EAC databases can make the task of collocating resources related to a given individual or group much simpler. This linking functionality has the potential to create, in a sense, a "semantic web" of description, where users can navigate seamlessly between multiple creators and multiple related resources.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Steven Mandeville-Gamble, in discussion with the author, March 8, 2006.

In addition to this linking function, many interviewees expressed the opinion that EAC records by themselves would function as useful sources of historical information on individuals and corporate bodies. In essence, they argue that EAC databases could be used as online biographical dictionaries. This could greatly ease the amount of contextual research that users would have to undertake in order to properly interpret archival records. As Todd Kosmerick notes:

“There are many people and organizations that are encountered through archival collections, but there isn't a lot of background information on them or you have to do a lot of research to get that information. If the research is done when the collection is processed and the information is used to create an EAC record that is put up on our website, I think that users are going to find that very useful.”⁶⁸

Such biographical resources could also be profitably utilized by reference archivists and librarians in order to respond to user queries for information on a given record creator.⁶⁹ Furthermore, by providing this detailed biographical information to the user at the onset of the research process, the user can more easily decide whether a particular person or organization is worth further attention. This saves the user the trouble of having to sift through finding aids and other record descriptions to gain a sense of the creating entity's relevance to a particular topic.⁷⁰

Many interviewees, however, noted that the EAC record, though very functional and useful, was still a distinct path to obtaining archival records that needed to be supplemented by other paths. More specifically, EAC privileges a provenance-based approach to access, whereas many users have found subject-based access, through tools such as Library of Congress subject headings embedded within records descriptions, to be vital in finding materials related to a subject-based need. Some “purist” archivists

⁶⁸ Todd Kosmerick, in discussion with the author, March 8, 2006.

⁶⁹ Michelle Light, in discussion with the author, March 6, 2006..

⁷⁰ Dick Sargent, in discussion with the author, March 10, 2006..

have argued that subject access is inappropriate for archival records. Unlike bibliographic materials, which are created specifically to convey topical information to the reader, archival materials are only the byproducts of actions undertaken in the past. Therefore, the “purists” argue that archival records cannot really be “about” a topic. However, subject access has proven itself practical and useful, particularly for novice users who are not used to converting subject-based information needs into names of related individuals or groups.⁷¹ None of the interviewees advocated replacing subject access entirely with the provenance route, but instead felt that EAC needed to coexist with other access routes, such as subject and keyword access, within the overall descriptive system. In fact, one interviewee brought up the possibility that, by using controlled subject headings in the descriptive fields related to functions and activities undertaken by the record creator, EAC could greatly streamline the provision of subject access, by obviating the need to put redundant subject headings within each record description.⁷²

⁷¹ Daniel Pitti, in discussion with the author, March 14, 2006.

⁷² Per-Gunnar Ottoson, in discussion with the author, March 7, 2006.

Conclusions

Although the original ad hoc EAC working group, having served its purpose to develop the framework of EAC, is no longer functional, the development of EAC, both in its content and in its implementation, moves on. At the 2005 annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists, Daniel Pitti formally asked the Society to charge an EAC working group, which would work alongside the current EAD working group. In addition, work is being done to find an institutional “home” for EAC, much as the Library of Congress is the institutional home for EAD. Establishing EAC within a large institutional partner is crucial, both in terms of ensuring sustained, non-episodic financial support and professional involvement in the standard and its implementations. Eventually, EAC will be released as a finished standard (i.e. moving from “beta” to “1.0”). Likewise, the NCEAC project is continuing in its goal of creating a test implementation of an EAC database of authority records from North Carolina cultural institutions.

In the coming years, much work will need to be done, both in the NCEAC project and in the overall EAC community, to educate the wider archival community about EAC and its potential benefits for archival repositories. NCEAC has the advantage of being coordinated by NC ECHO, which has conducted training sessions throughout the state of North Carolina on implementing EAD, digitizing collections, utilizing metadata, and other project related to creating an online presence for North Carolina cultural heritage institutions. Therefore, the infrastructure is clearly available for educating archivists in

the basics of enhanced creator description and in using the online entry form that NCEAC will utilize to facilitate easier entry of authority information.⁷³ Workshops could also be provided through the Society of North Carolina Archivists, a statewide professional organization for archivists. However, as is common in the cultural heritage landscape, NC ECHO is dependent on continued state funding, and is thus at the mercy of budget cuts and reorganization, which could jeopardize continued support for the NCEAC project.⁷⁴

Similar efforts could occur among the broader community of archivists in the United States and abroad, though no formal educational efforts have occurred as yet. With the charging of an EAC working group, one can foresee greater future involvement from SAA in the promotion of EAC in the archival community, possibly including more informational sessions at SAA annual meetings and workshops on EAC through the Society's continuing professional educational program. Further educational programs could be funded by inter-institutional consortia such as the Research Libraries Group, which was instrumental in the development of EAC and has funded workshops for EAD in the past.

Even if the financial and institutional support necessary to promulgate EAC within the archival community is forthcoming, there will still be huge challenges facing such efforts. For instance, unlike EAD, which can be implemented within an institution and tailored to its unique descriptive practices, EAC's authority control function requires the participation of many archival institutions, as well as a high degree of standardization between EAC records. This will require a great deal of collaborative effort among

⁷³ Todd Kosmerick, in discussion with the author, March 8, 2006.

⁷⁴ Ruth Bryan, in discussion with the author, March 15, 2006..

repositories to agree on guidelines for proper EAC records. Although the archival profession has become more collaborative in recent years, archivists still may not be comfortable foregoing institutional control to create shared resources.⁷⁵ Furthermore, even if an institution wishes to put the effort necessary to integrate the creation of EAC records into their workflow, such an effort would only be one of many other demands being made on the limited resources of the modern archival institution. From the challenges of dealing with born-digital records, to the processing backlogs resulting from the size of modern archival collections, the creation of digitized collections, and the conversion of legacy finding aids to EAD, there may not be sufficient resources and energy within the archival profession to fully embrace EAC. One cannot help but think that EAC may be a great idea that is simply too far ahead of its time.

However, even if EAC itself is slow to be accepted, the principles of enhanced creator description and separate maintenance of authority records that support EAC are too important to ignore. Perhaps the most exciting and revolutionary aspect of EAC is its potential to transform the central archival principle of provenance into a tool for the empowerment of archival users. Provenance has historically been a useful concept for archivists, as it has allowed archivists to preserve the documentary integrity of records as evidence of past activities. However, while archivists are committed to the principle of provenance, users often find provenance difficult to understand, particularly users accustomed to the subject-based arrangement of bibliographic materials within libraries. Navigating a provenance-based descriptive system is a skill acquired largely through experience. Identifying records creators relevant to a particular topic or time period, a crucial step in finding relevant archival materials, has traditionally required the user to

⁷⁵ Interview, Kathleen Roe.

perform a great deal of background research. Those who already have a great deal of “domain knowledge,” such as historical scholars and experienced researchers, are at a distinct advantage in identifying relevant record creators. Although archivists, through user instruction and reference interviews, have tried to educate novice users about provenance, they have generally not succeeded in making provenance a user-friendly means of accessing a collection.⁷⁶

EAC promises to change all of that. By providing detailed creator descriptions linked together in an online environment, EAC-based authority databases can allow users to easily locate various records creators that are relevant to their information needs, and thus eliminate the need for arduous and time-consuming background research. The use of controlled descriptive fields within the EAC record allows users to perform powerful searches of records creators, making it easy for users to find “women entrepreneurs in the 1890’s” or “African-American clergy in Georgia” without having to sift through pages of biographical information. Also, by navigating from the EAC record directly to an EAD-encoded finding aid, a mental model is created for the user in which archival records described in the finding aid result from the activities described in the description of the record creator. Thus, EAC, if properly implemented, could “unlock the door” of provenance, making it a transparent and functional concept for a wide range of users in archives. Even if only for this reason, the development of EAC is well deserving of the continued attention and efforts of the archival community.

⁷⁶ Michelle Light, in discussion with the author, March 6, 2006..

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Appendix A: Interview Questions for Participants

Questions for EAC working group members:

What initially interested you about EAC, and what caused you to be involved in the EAC working group?

How has the work of the EAC working group progressed since the publishing of the EAC tag library?

How did the international nature of the EAC working group affect the development of EAC?

How do you see EAC fitting within an archival institution's current creator description practices, both with regards to authority work (through NACO or another name authority collective) and to contextual description (such as biographical and historical notes in finding aids)? Will it supplant, or coexist with, these practices?

How will EAC affect the traditional standards of archival description? How will finding aids and other descriptive need to be changed to accommodate the shared contextual information that EAC will offer?

What are the challenges of making EAC a truly international standard for creator description? Do you feel that EAC will lead to internationally-maintained creator description resources, or will such projects be nationally, or even regionally-based?

EAC promises to be a tool for creator description for libraries, museums, and cultural heritage institutions other than archives and manuscript collections. Do you feel that EAC will be attractive to these non-archival communities, given that its development has been spearheaded by the archival field? What will need to be done to make EAC attractive to these groups?

How will EAC enhance the ability of archival repositories to meet the needs of its users? Will users be served by a system that enforces the provenance-based description of records, and minimizes the importance of subject access?

Has there been any discussion so far on how to educate the wider archival community on the content and implementation of EAC?

Questions for NCEAC group members:

What initially interested you about EAC, and what caused you to be involved in NCEAC?

How does your institution currently handle creator description? Does your institution maintain separate authority control files?

How will the implementation of EAC be integrated into your institution's workflow? Will it be used alongside your existing archival authority practices, or will they largely supplant those practices?

To what extent have your institution's creator description practices been influenced by ISAAR(CPF)? How do you feel this will affect the process of implementing EAC at your institution?

How will EAC affect the way your institution undertakes the description of archival collections? Will you rely on EAC creator description for biographical information, or will you still integrate biographical information in your finding aids?

How have the differing backgrounds of the NCEAC working group members, in terms of the type of institution represented, affected the early decision-making regarding the implementation of EAC?

EAC promises to be a tool for creator description for libraries, museums, and cultural heritage institutions other than archives and manuscript collections. Do you feel that EAC will be attractive to these non-archival communities, given that its development has been spearheaded by the archival field? What will need to be done to make EAC attractive to these groups?

How will EAC enhance the ability of archival repositories to meet the needs of its users? Will users be served by a system that enforces the provenance-based description of records, and minimizes the importance of subject access?

Has there been any discussion so far on how to educate the wider archival community in North Carolina on the content, implementation, and benefits of EAC?

Appendix B: Sample EAC Record (Textile Workers Union of America. South Region)

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 <p>Lobbying</p>
 <p>Collective bargaining</p>

</funactdesc>

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<head>Historical Note</head>

<p>In 1901, the United Textile Workers of America (UTW), was formed as an affiliate of the American Federation of Labor (AFL). In 1937, the Committee for Industrial Organization (later the Congress of Industrial Organizations or CIO) formed the Textile Workers Organizing Committee (TWOC). In 1939, locals from the TWOC and the UTW merged to form the Textile Workers Union of America (TWUA). The TWUA led numerous organizing campaigns in the union-resistant South, desiring to help textile workers achieve higher wages, health insurance, and other benefits, and to insure fair labor practices. In 1976, the TWUA merged with another textile union, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, to form the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU), which was affiliated with the AFL-CIO. Scott Hoyman was an organizer and a bargainer with the TWUA, serving as the Southern Regional Director in the 1960s and 1970s. He worked on numerous organization and wage campaigns, including the J. P. Stevens & Co. campaign to organize workers and investigate unfair labor practices. Following the formation of the ACTWU in 1976, Hoyman became Executive Vice-President for the Textiles Division.</p>

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Textile Workers Union of America (TWUA), serving as the Southern Regional
Director in the 1960s and 1970s. The TWUA actively sought to organize southern
textile plants to help workers achieve higher wages, health insurance, and other
benefits, and to insure fair labor practices. This collection contains
correspondence, reports, minutes, agendas, pro-union and anti-union handouts and
flyers, clippings, pictures, and other materials related to Scott Hoyman's activities
with the TWUA. Materials document the internal functions of the TWUA, such as
meetings, conferences, elections, and funding; the union's work with various
organizations, including the Federation of Textile Representatives (FTR), and the
AFL-CIO; TWUA's merger with Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America to

become the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU); organizing campaigns in North Carolina and South Carolina, most notably the J. P. Stevens Campaign; staff training and education; organizing tactics; membership drives and figures; the union's policies on political and industrial issues; and trends and events in the textile industry. Notable subjects include biennial conventions, Chatham Manufacturing Company, Collins & Aikman Corporation, Erwin Cotton Mills, executive council meetings, the Federation of Textile Representatives, GARCO (General Asbestos and Rubber Division, Raybestos-Manhattan, Inc.), handouts and flyers, Harriet and Henderson Cotton Mills, J. P. Stevens & Co., Lone Star Textiles, outgoing mail, and southern staff conferences.</abstract>

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Appendix C: Consent Form for Participants:

University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill Consent to Participate in a Research Study Adult Participants Social Behavioral Form

IRB Study #LIBS 05-093

Consent Form Version Date: January 24, 2006

Title of Study: More Than Just a Name: Archival Authority Control, Creator Description, and the Development of Encoded Archival Context (EAC).

Principal Investigator: Jesse Brown

UNC-Chapel Hill Department: School of Library and Information Science

UNC-Chapel Hill Phone number: 919-360-5698

Email Address: brownjf@email.unc.edu

Faculty Advisor: Roslyn Holdzkom

Study Contact telephone number: 919-360-5698

Study Contact email: brownjf@email.unc.edu

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. To join the study is voluntary. You may refuse to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. You may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form. You should ask the researchers named above, or staff members who may assist them, any questions you have about this study at any time.

What is the purpose of this study?

This study will investigate the current status and development of Encoded Archival Context (EAC), and its effect on archival authority and creator description practices. It is hoped that, by interviewing archivists involved in the creation and early implementation

of EAC, the study will shed light on the ways EAC will change and improve creator description practices, how it will enhance the user experience in archives, and how the collaborative nature of EAC's development has influenced EAC's progress.

You are being asked to be in the study because, as a participant in an EAC working group, you are in a unique position to comment on the development of EAC and the issues surrounding its eventual implementation.

How many people will take part in this study?

If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of approximately ten people in this research study.

How long will your part in this study last?

Your part in the study will consist of one telephone interview, which will last approximately 45 minutes to one hour. No follow-up interviews will be necessary.

What will happen if you take part in the study?

Upon receipt of the signed copy of this consent form, the principal investigator will contact you via email to confirm a specific time for a telephone interview. At the beginning of the telephone interview, you will be reminded of the possible risks involved in participating in this study, and you will be asked if you wish to continue. The telephone interview itself will consist of at least 9-10 questions related to the development of EAC and its potential benefits and drawbacks, with possible follow-up questions. You may refuse to answer any question asked by the principal investigator, and you may end the interview at any time. The interview will be recorded using a digital voice recorder. Your interview, along with the interviews of the other participants will be analyzed for common points and opinions, which will be discussed in the final paper.

What are the possible benefits from being in this study?

Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge. You may not benefit personally from being in this research study.

What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?

There is a possibility that the discussion of certain institutional practices related to creator description may be frowned upon by your institution. In addition, the opinions you express may, upon their inclusion in the paper, cause friction among other working group members who hold differing views about issues related to EAC. Because of these risks, a copy of the completed final paper will be sent to you before it is submitted for grading, in order to ensure your views have been represented correctly. Any objections you feel obligated to make can be emailed to the principal investigator, who will amend the final paper accordingly.

There may be uncommon or previously unknown risks. You should report any problems to the principal investigator.

How will your privacy be protected?

Before the telephone interview, you will be assigned an identification number by the principal investigator. At the beginning of the taped interview, the investigator will vocally record your ID number. A separate sheet of paper will be maintained linking your ID number with your name. In this way, no personally identifiable information will be included on the interview recording unless you voluntarily provide it.

At the conclusion of the interview, the recording of your interview will be transferred to a recordable compact disc, and the recording deleted from the voice recorder. The compact disc, along with the paper containing your name and ID number, will be stored in a locked container located at the residence of the principal investigator. The compact disc recordings and paper will be kept until the final report is submitted, at which time both the disc and the paper will be destroyed.

The names and home institutions of participants *may* be identified in any report or publication about this study. **If you do not wish for your name or the name of your institution to be identified in any report or publication about this study, please mark on the appropriate blank at the end of this form.**

Although every effort will be made to keep research records private, there may be times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of such records, including personal information. This is very unlikely, but if disclosure is ever required, UNC-Chapel Hill will take steps allowable by law to protect the privacy of personal information. In some cases, your information in this research study could be reviewed by representatives of the University, research sponsors, or government agencies for purposes such as quality control or safety.

Will you receive anything for being in this study?

You will not receive anything for taking part in this study.

Will it cost you anything to be in this study?

There will be no costs for being in the study

What if you have questions about this study?

You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, or concerns, you should contact the researchers listed on the first page of this form.

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu.

**University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Adult Participants
Social Behavioral Form**

IRB Study #LIBS 05-093

Consent Form Version Date: January 24, 2006

Title of Study: More Than Just a Name: Archival Authority Control, Creator Description, and the Development of Encoded Archival Context (EAC).

Principal Investigator: Jesse Brown

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UNC-Chapel Hill Phone number: 919-360-5698

Email Address: brownjf@email.unc.edu

Faculty Advisor: Roslyn Holdzkom

Study Contact telephone number: 919-360-5698

Study Contact email: brownjf@email.unc.edu

Participant's Agreement:

I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

Signature of Research Participant

Date

Printed Name of Research Participant

Please check one of the following:

_____ My name and the name of my host institution MAY be used in any report or publication about this study.

_____ My name and the name of my host institution MAY NOT be used in any report or publication about this study.