



I'm Rebecca French, and I'm the Metadata Analyst Librarian at JMU Libraries. I'm presenting today about an app called Spaceport, which I developed to facilitate distribution of our Special Collections finding aids.

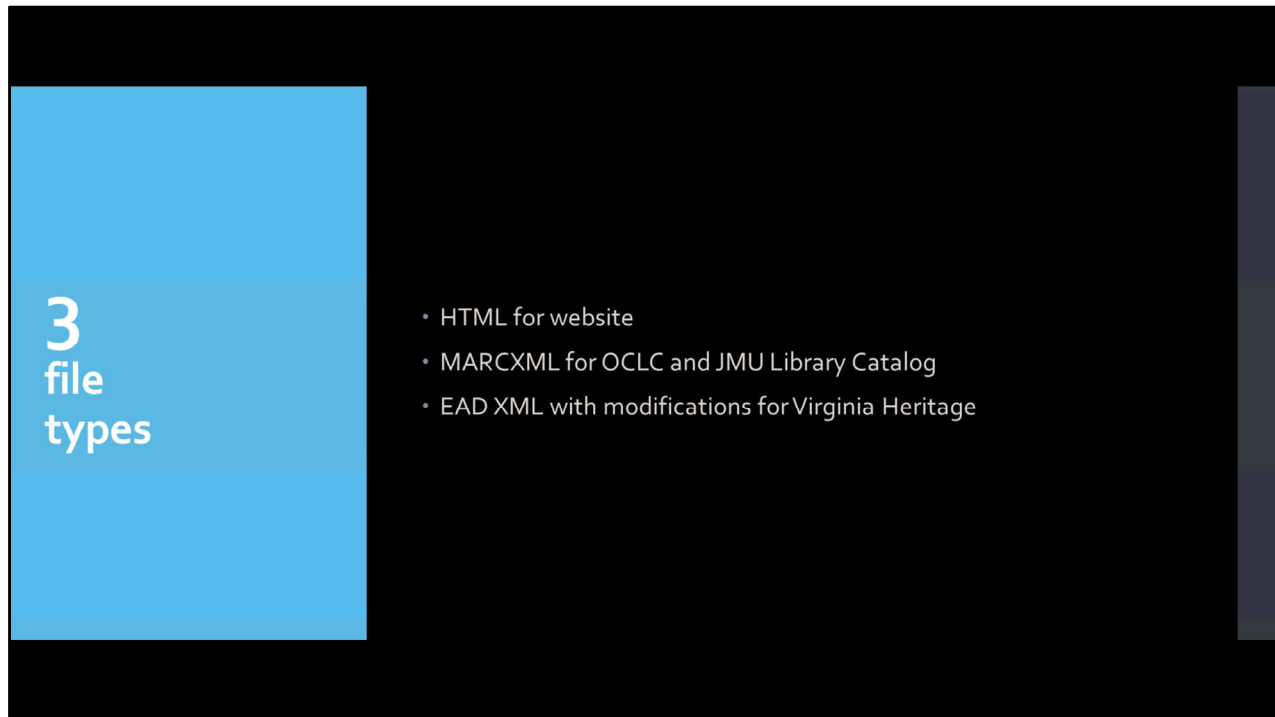
The slides for this presentation are available at tinyurl.com/SpaceportVLA.



4
discovery
platforms

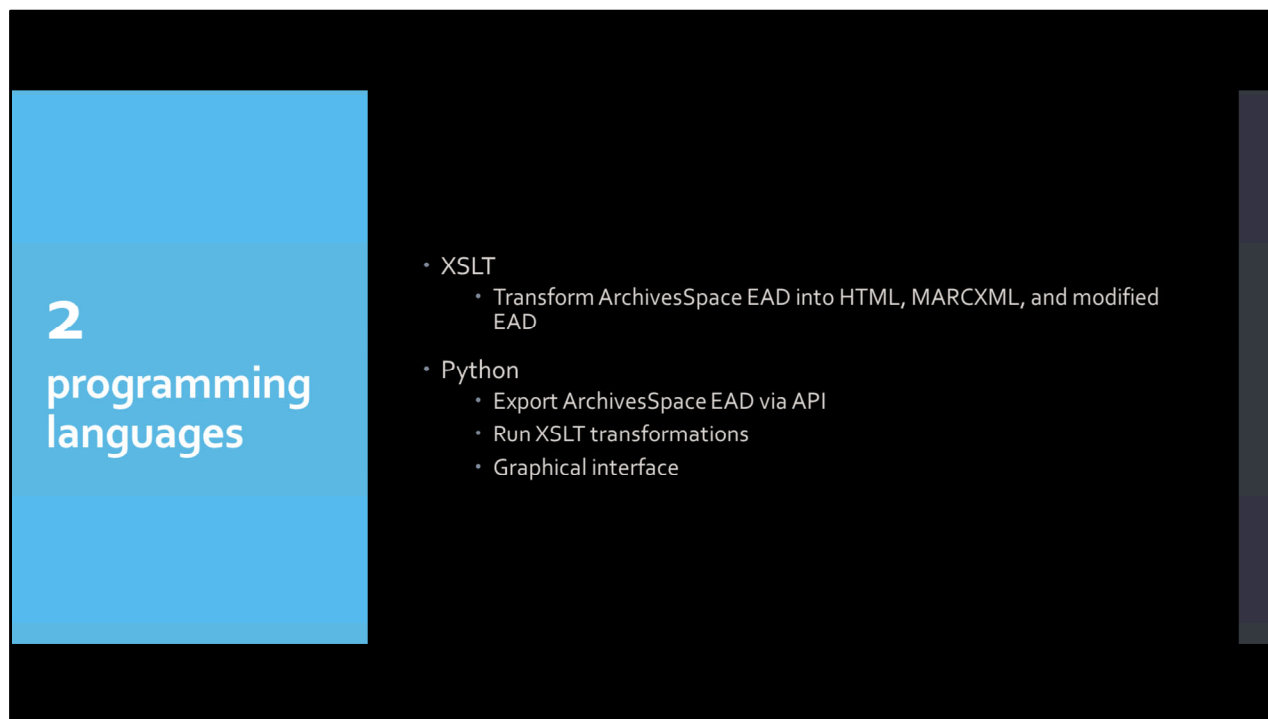
- JMU Libraries website
- OCLC
- JMU Library Catalog
- Virginia Heritage database

JMU's Special Collections makes finding aids available through four discovery platforms. Each finding aid has a web page on our Libraries website. Our Special Collections cataloger creates a MARC record for each collection, and these are added to OCLC and to our local catalog. We also contribute our finding aids to the Virginia Heritage database.

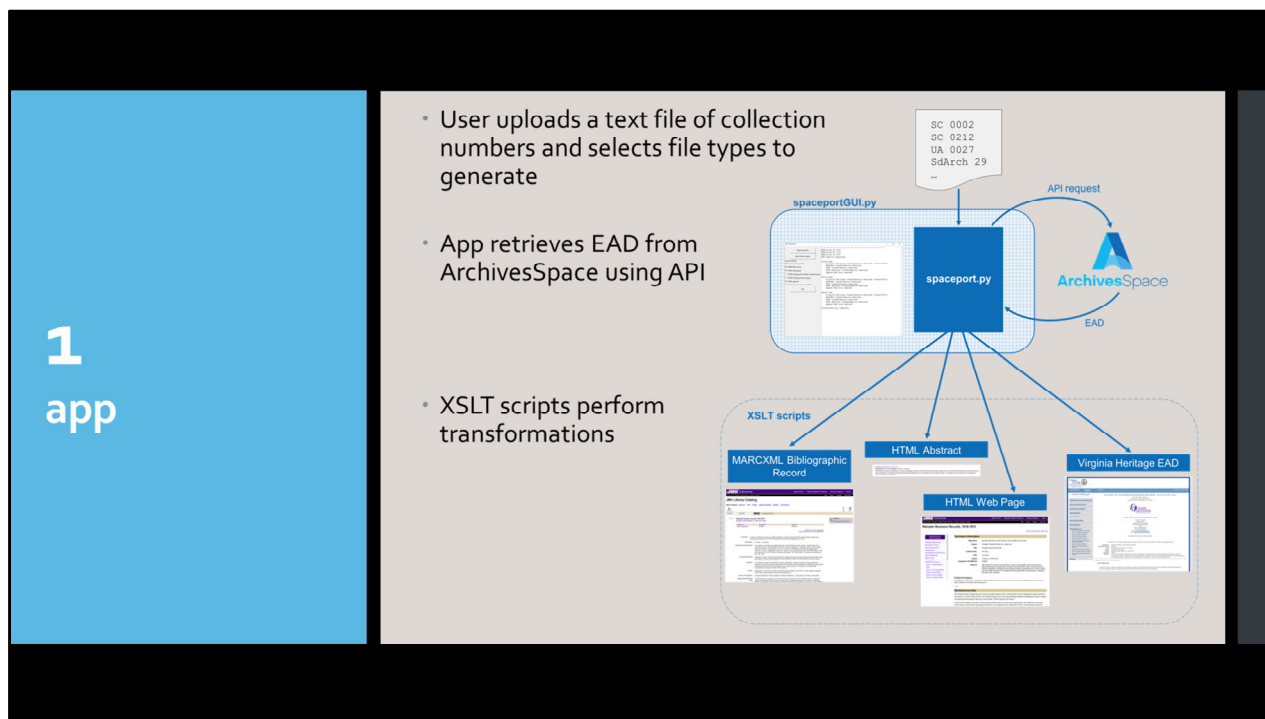


These different platforms require different types of files to be uploaded: HTML for the website, and MARC records for OCLC and the catalog. The EADs for Virginia Heritage also require a number of modifications so that certain elements will display as desired on that platform. In the past, these different files were created through a significant amount of manual data entry, copy and pasting, and hand-encoding. For example, the MARC records were created by copying information from the web page. The edits needed for Virginia Heritage could take from half an hour to up to several days, depending on the length of the finding aid. All of this manual work made it extremely time-consuming to publish and update our finding aids and introduced many opportunities for human error.

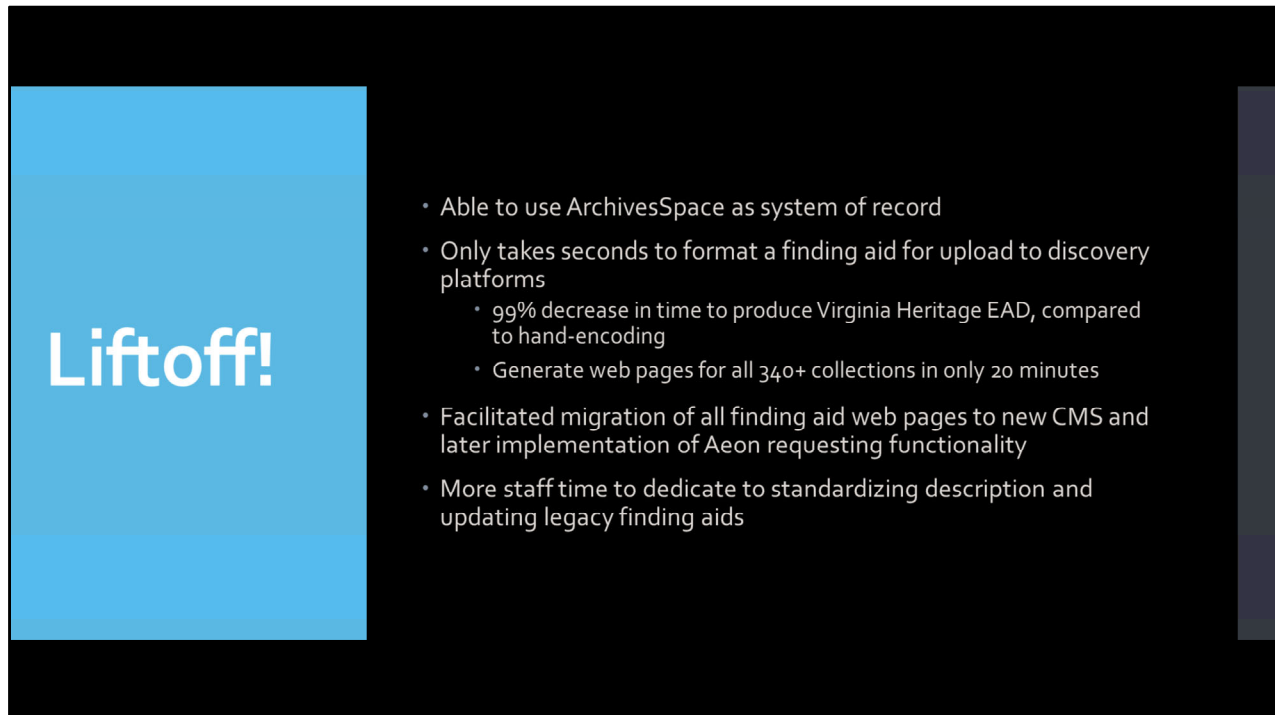
[It's possible to export MARCXML directly from ArchivesSpace, but we chose to create our MARC records ourselves in order to make a number of local changes without having to customize the ArchivesSpace plugin.]



So our Special Collections team reached out to me to see if we could improve this process. They were beginning to use ArchivesSpace, so I created XSLT transformation scripts to take the ArchivesSpace EADs and produce HTML, MARCXML, and modified EAD XML files. Special Collections staff initially ran these scripts using the Oxygen XML editor. This was enough of an improvement over their previous manual workflow that I then decided to further streamline the process by using Python to download the EAD from ArchivesSpace and run the transformations. The result is the app I called Spaceport.



This slide gives an overview of how the Spaceport app works. The user uploads a text file of collection numbers and specifies which files they want created. A Python script makes a call to the ArchivesSpace API and returns the EAD for each desired collection. Then the XSLT transformations are run and the resulting files are saved. [There are some additional modifications to the Virginia Heritage EADs that weren't possible with XSLT, so those are able to be handled with Python.] There is a second Python script that controls a simple graphical interface with user options which shows a progress report as the app is running. It's all compiled into an executable, and the app lives on a shared network drive, which allows me to easily make updates and have them automatically pushed out to all users.



Liftoff!

- Able to use ArchivesSpace as system of record
- Only takes seconds to format a finding aid for upload to discovery platforms
 - 99% decrease in time to produce Virginia Heritage EAD, compared to hand-encoding
 - Generate web pages for all 340+ collections in only 20 minutes
- Facilitated migration of all finding aid web pages to new CMS and later implementation of Aeon requesting functionality
- More staff time to dedicate to standardizing description and updating legacy finding aids

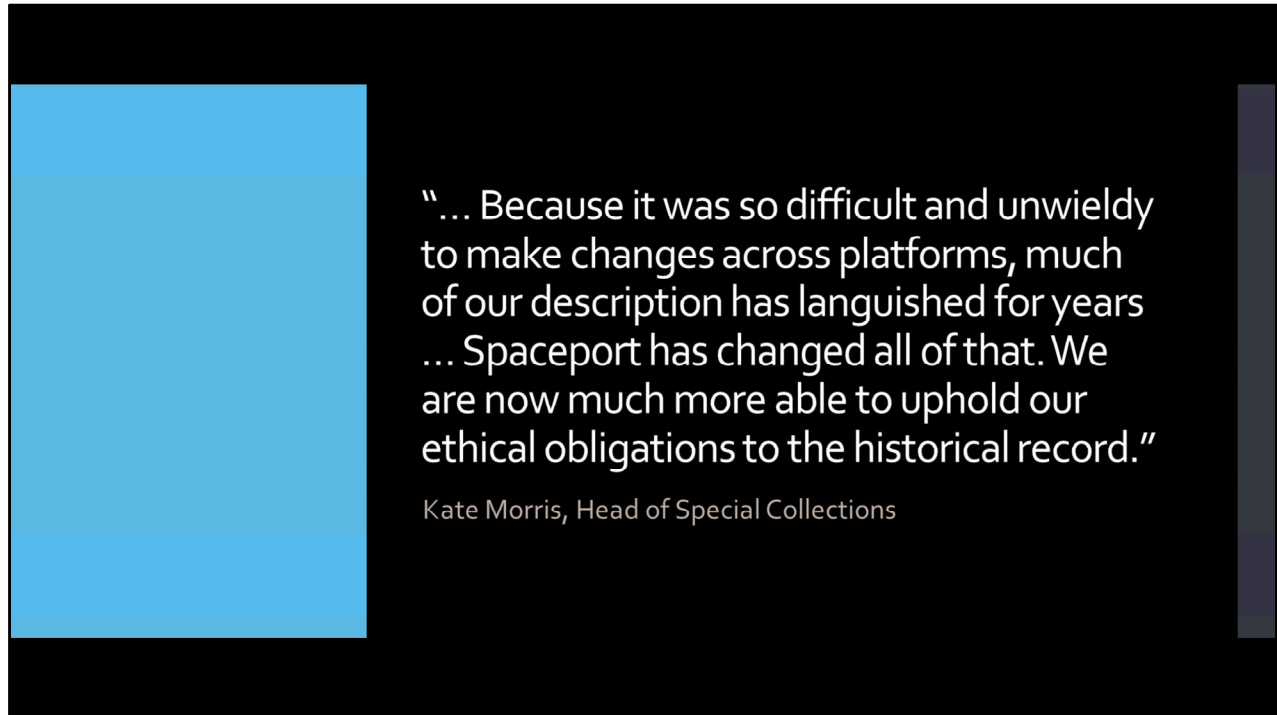
We've been using Spaceport for over a year and have experienced a number of benefits. Because we're now able to easily make changes in ArchivesSpace and export them to other destinations, we truly have one system of record, rather than having finding aids in four different places that are all out of sync with each other where none is truly the "master."

Spaceport has greatly sped up preparing files for our various discovery platforms. It now only takes a few seconds per collection to generate files, which is a 99% decrease compared to the time it took to hand-encode an EAD for Virginia Heritage. We're able to generate web pages for all our collections in 20 minutes, which was very helpful when the Libraries migrated our website to a new content management system last year. We also recently implemented the Aeon request system and were able to easily add request links to each collection's web page with Spaceport.

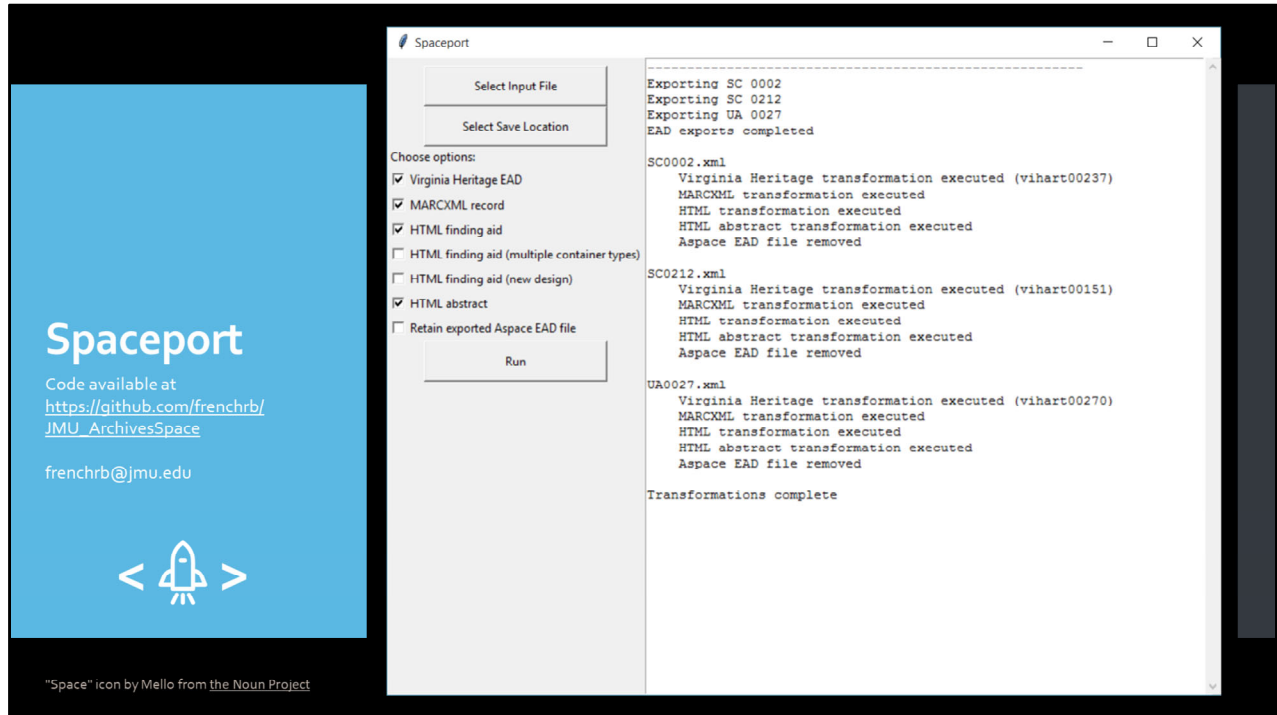


Our Special Collections staff have been incredibly enthusiastic about Spaceport. Tiffany, our Archivist, said she can’t imagine her life without Spaceport.

Because the app has greatly reduced the amount of time that needs to be spent on tedious formatting, Special Collections has been able to dedicate more time to standardizing description and making updates to legacy finding aids.



I want to share this quote from our Head of Special Collections, Kate Morris, because I think she does a great job of emphasizing the impact this project has beyond just workflow efficiencies. Kate says, "Archival description is fluid, and as archivists, we should be open to revisions and corrections to our description. Because it was so difficult and unwieldy to make changes across platforms, much of our description has languished for years because of the difficulty in applying changes. Spaceport has changed all of that. We are now much more able to uphold our ethical obligations to the historical record."



I'll close by showing a closer look at the interface. All the code is freely available on GitHub if you're interested in adapting Spaceport for use at your own library. [I'm happy to take questions in whatever time we have left.] Thank you!