Research and Publishing
As An Archivist

Publishing As A Co-Author

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May 8, 2013
2013 Society of Florida Archivists Annual Meeting

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Case Study:
the Usability of Online Finding Aids

- **What prompted the article**
  - **POLARIS Project at Pepper Library**
  - **Need to analyze research usability of Pepper Collection finding aid in the online environment**
- **Activities Undertaken**
  - **Lit Review**
  - **Canvassing SAA Listserv**
  - **Survey researchers in history, poli. sci, gerontology**
  - **Used graduate statistics students to create focus group**
  - **Measured user feedback after public release**

Print Publication vs. E-Book

- **Professional Development Leave – Fall 2009**

- **Goal was a processing manual**

- **Ultimately selected SAA as venue as they saw need for it**

- **Steps involved in publishing** http://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/GuidelinesForNewPublications-2013-2.pdf

- **Collaboration – conference calls, divided up content, posted for discussion using PB Works**
  http://pbworks.com/

Reactions: Fall 2009-Spring 2010

- Board felt very useful to profession, particularly to small repositories

- Need for newer and minimalist approaches to processing

- Held great promise for practitioners and archival faculty

- Liked idea of decision trees, sidebars, various approaches to apply to single collections

- Suggested need for feedback from corporate, religious, museum, government archives

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Reactions (2)

- Consider collections with mix of AV, electronic, and photographic materials, not just standalone
- Don't make too rigid a distinction between "classical" and "minimalist" approaches – many places employ both
- Need to reach out to variety of repositories – not just college and universities
- Board would like to see entire book before an external review
- Arrangement and description more fluid, not linear

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Outcome: Summer 2010-Spring 2011

- **Change to Case Study Approach: "Archival Processing in the 21st Century"**

- **Decided to create an E-Pub with core of case studies for comments and additional content, using SAA's Drupal content management system.**

Reactions: Nov. 2010

- **Concern about whether SAA can maintain a truly interactive resource**

- **Need to see template of elements we'd like contributors to include in each case study (like "Campus Case Studies")**

- **Need to see a plan for adding and editing additions to the E-Book**

Reactions: March 2011

- **Case Studies didn't appear challenging enough to generate discussion and interactivity**

- **Need for richer contextual info about different repositories**
- **More discussions and thought processes that go into individual processing decisions**

- **Geared almost exclusively to archivists with minimal training working in small institutions**

Reactions: March 2011 (2)

- **Very little introduction given to readers about basic arrangement and description standards, or explanations of how archivists integrate standards into their work**

- **Sustainability – big investment in design, quality control procedures, and interactivity with no prospect of funding to offset expenses.**

- **Project really more appropriate as a feature for SAA's Description Section website rather than full-blown publication.**

Co-Authors' Final Decision

- **Create a wiki based on original concept of core case studies and interactivity**

- **Still a work in progress**

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Questions?

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