Shedding Light on the Unknown: Creating Encoded Archival Description Records for Enhanced Access to Unprocessed Manuscript Collections

Catherine Grandgeorge, MLIS Capstone 2015

Project Sponsor: The Newberry Library

As part of their transition from a paper based circulation system to the online request system Aeon, the Modern Manuscripts Department at the Newberry Library recognized the need for a stronger online presence for their unprocessed manuscript collections. Many of these collections were only described in paper inventories. My project addressed this information problem through the creation of collection level encoded archival description (EAD) records.

I would like to thank the Modern Manuscripts Department at the Newberry Library for their project suggestion, guidance, and support. Thank you to Martha Briggs, Alison Hinderliter, and Kelly Kress.

- Patrons of the library now have online access to unprocessed collections.
- Finding aids are in place for future expansion when collections are processed.
- Archivists at the library can track circulation of unprocessed collections for data to help determine processing priorities.
- Collection records will be used in external portals including ArchiveGrid and the Chicago Collections Consortium.

Outcome

Through the work of this project, approximately 300 unprocessed collections now have an online presence in the library’s list of manuscript abstracts, a collection level finding aid, and are available for request in Aeon.

Impact

Process

The archival data management system Archivists’ Toolkit was used to create the EAD records. The chart below describes each phase of the project.

Phase 1: Data Clean Up
Reconciled collections with multiple accession records and added additional metadata elements.

Phase 2: Identify Collections
Created a list of all unprocessed collections that needed EAD records and identified additional collections also needing records.

Phase 3: Create Records
Created collection level EAD records for all collections identified in previous step and added additional metadata elements.

Phase 4: Testing
Tested finding aids produced from the EAD records online and in the Aeon system.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Modern Manuscripts Department at the Newberry Library for their project suggestion, guidance, and support. Thank you to Martha Briggs, Alison Hinderliter, and Kelly Kress.