RLG Finding Aids Program

RLG Primary Sources Program

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July 1998　　　　The original RLG version of the **RLG Finding Aids Program** can be seen here.

RLG's Finding Aid Program has four components:

1. Promulgating the Encoded Archival Description (EAD) standard through training sessions for the archival community.
2. Coordinating members' efforts to implement the standard and establish best practice.
3. A tested conversion vendor able to apply the community's guidelines for EAD encoding of their finding aids.
4. A service providing integrated online access to finding aids, collection-level records, and digital versions of documents.

The EAD Advisory Group works with RLG and member staff to carry out this program.

1. Encoded Archival Description (EAD) Training Sessions

RLG jump-started its members' ability to start collaborative conversion of finding aids from paper to Web-based form by developing a workshop in Finding Aids SGML Training (FAST):

- Twelve RLG [FAST regional workshops](#) for members held, July 1996 - August 1997; an additional workshop conducted in Australia, March 1998; RLG will sponsor additional sessions as needed.
- RLG has turned over the FAST curriculum to the Society of American Archivists (SAA) for wider use.
- In response to RLG members' interest in advanced implementation training, the EAD Advisory Group is identifying advanced training needs.

2. Support for Use of EAD

The RLG archival community [shares information](#) on best practice and available implementation tools and collaborates to create needed tools:

- EAD advisors have helped to develop an [EAD Support Site](#) with:
  - guidance on using EAD
  - recommended application guidelines
  - information on the RLG conversion service
  - instructions for including finding aids in the Archival Resources service
- RLG is coordinating with SAA to ensure compliance with professional standards: SAA's General Application Guidelines, revised EAD DTD, and revised Tag Library (due summer 1998).

3. Conversion Outsourcing Service

Besides the ability to convert finding aids in-house, institutions need cost-effective, reliable outsourcing options to leverage their efforts. RLG has assisted in three ways:

- Issued a request for proposals, interviewed six responding companies, and tested their capabilities with a markup test.
- After evaluating results, negotiated a favorable conversion price for members with the selected vendor, [Apex Data Services](#).
- With support from the Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation, RLG is providing matching-fund grants to 28 members to support Apex conversion of over 350 finding aids.

4. Archival Collections Online Access

RLG's objective is an ["Archival Resources" service](#) that will enable users to locate finding aids dispersed across the World Wide Web and study the entire finding aid content through a Web-based searching interface.

- Following beta-version evaluation by several RLG advisory groups, the new service's search engine, user interface, and databases are being

readied for trial use in August. Access to Archival Resources will be available by annual subscription beginning on September 1, 1998.

- Searching can be done on a simple or advanced level -- taking advantage of the SGML encoding to identify search terms and components of the finding aids.
- Approach taken: Use of OpenText Live Link to search distributed Web sites and retrieve SGML-encoded finding aids for indexing; SMGL versions remain on local servers outside the RLG environment, but the RLG search engine converts the SGML finding aid to HTML for purposes of consistent display and to avert the need for users to load viewer software.

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