



Internationaler Archivkongress 2004

23.-29. August - Wien - Österreich

Archive, Gedächtnis und Wissen



Harnessing the Power of Provenance in Archival Description: The Second Edition of the ISAAR (Corporate Bodies, Persons and Families)


Adrian Cunningham

Stefano Vitali

Nils Brübach



HARNESSING THE POWER OF PROVENANCE IN ARCHIVAL DESCRIPTION



Adrian Cunningham
ICA Committee on Descriptive
Standards

Using ISAAR (CPF)
to Document the
Relationships
Between Records
and Recordkeeping
Activity and to
Improve Access to
and Understanding
of Records

THIS TALK WILL COVER:



- ⌘ Documenting the complex reality of provenance
- ⌘ The role of ISAAR (CPF)
- ⌘ Future directions

WHAT IS ARCHIVAL DESCRIPTION?

- ⌘ Provenance is the primary locus of archival intellectual control & description
- ⌘ Records are 'information created or received and maintained as evidence and information by an organisation or person in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business or the conduct of affairs' (ISO15489, *Records Management*)
- ⌘ Importance of documenting records in context

WHAT IS PROVENANCE?



⌘ The relationships between records and the organisations or individuals that created, accumulated and/or maintained and used them in the conduct of personal or corporate activity.

(ISAD (G), 2nd edition, 2000)

OUR JOB IS TO DOCUMENT PROVENANCE

- ⌘ Provenance is what gives records meaning – it is what makes them records
- ⌘ To understand and use records we have to understand and document the purpose and context of their creation
- ⌘ We have to understand and document the relationship between recordkeeping activity and the records created by organisations/persons
- ⌘ Documentation of provenance can be a useful point of access to records

PROBLEMS WITH PROVENANCE



- ⌘ Provenance is more complex than traditional systems of archival description recognise – this is especially true with electronic records
- ⌘ Complex web of dynamic inter-relationships between different records creating entities
- ⌘ Often there is not a simple 1-1 relationship between records creators and records
- ⌘ Administrative change in governments and organisations (successive multiple provenance)
- ⌘ Incidence of simultaneous multiple provenance

HOW THEN SHOULD WE DOCUMENT PROVENANCE?



- ⌘ We should build archival systems that reflect rather than distort the complex reality of provenance/recordkeeping activity
- ⌘ Separate but linked descriptions of records and records creating entities enables us to manage and represent the complex reality of provenance
- ⌘ Data inputs into an archival descriptive system may look very different to the outputs of that system – while inputs should be standardised, outputs can take an infinite variety of forms

ISAAR (CPF) – INTERNATIONAL STANDARD ARCHIVAL AUTHORITY RECORD



- ⌘ First issued by the ICA in 1996
- ⌘ Standard for the separate description of records creating entities – corporate bodies, persons and families.
- ⌘ Meant to be used in conjunction with ISAD (G)
- ⌘ Reviewed/Revised by the ICA Committee on Descriptive Standards, 2001/2003

PURPOSE OF ISAAR (CPF)



- ⌘ A framework for the standardisation and exchange of archival descriptions that identify and describe provenance entities to enable:
 - ☑ Structured documentation of relationships between related entities, including administrative change
 - ☑ Users to understand the context of records creation and use and hence the meaning/purpose of records
 - ☑ Linking of and access to descriptions of often diverse and/or distributed holdings of records created by the same entity.

3 MAIN COMPONENTS OF DESCRIPTION OF PROVENANCE ENTITIES

- ⌘ Standardised uniform authority controlled headings/access points for retrieval purposes
- ⌘ Description of the records creating entity (biographical/administrative history), their functional responsibilities and their recordkeeping activities
- ⌘ Cross references/links to descriptions of records created by the entity and to other related entities (ie. Relationships)

ISAAR (CPF), 2nd ed.



⌘ 4 Areas (27 elements):

☑ Identity Area

☑ Description Area

☑ Relationships Area

☑ Control Area

1. Identity Area



- ⌘ Provide elements which identify uniquely the corporate body, the person or the family
- ⌘ In accordance with national international standards
- ⌘ And to define a standardized access point

Identity Area elements



- ⌘ 1.1. Type of entity (eg. Corporate Body)
- ⌘ 1.2 Authorized form(s) of name
- ⌘ 1.3 Parallel forms of name
- ⌘ 1.4 Standardized forms of name according to other rules (e.g. AACR2)
- ⌘ 1.5 Other forms of name
- ⌘ 1.6 Unique identifiers for corporate bodies

2. Description Area



- ⌘ Record information as a free text
biographical, corporate or family history
- ⌘ And/or as a structured text as specified in
the nine elements
- ⌘ And/or links to other relevant resources
- ⌘ All elements should include date qualifiers

Description Area elements



- ⌘ 2.1 Dates of existence
- ⌘ 2.2 History
- ⌘ 2.3 Places
- ⌘ 2.4 Legal status (corporate bodies only)
- ⌘ 2.5 Functions, occupations and activities
- ⌘ 2.6 Mandates/sources of authority
- ⌘ 2.7 Internal structures/Genealogy
- ⌘ 2.8 General context (e.g. nationality, religion)

3. Relationships Area



- ⌘ Record relationships with other corporate bodies, persons and/or families
- ⌘ Records relevant information as a free text narrative description
- ⌘ And/or as a structured text as specified in the elements
- ⌘ And/or links to other authority records
- ⌘ All relationships should include date qualifiers


4. Control Area



⌘ Provide information on sources used to compile the authority record, its creator(s) and status:

- ☒ 5.1 Authority record identifier
- ☒ 5.2 Institution identifiers
- ☒ 5.3 Rules and/or conventions used
- ☒ 5.4 Status of authority record
- ☒ 5.5 Level of detail of authority record
- ☒ 5.6 Dates of creation, revision or deletion
- ☒ 5.7 Languages and scripts of record
- ☒ 5.8 Sources
- ☒ 5.9 Maintenance notes

Relating CPFs to archival materials and other resources



⌘ Provide information on and/or links to archival descriptions, bibliographical and other relevant resources:

- ☑ Titles and identifiers of related resources
- ☑ Types of related resources
- ☑ Nature of relationships
- ☑ Dates of related resources and/or relationships

RELATED DEVELOPMENT – ENCODED ARCHIVAL CONTEXT



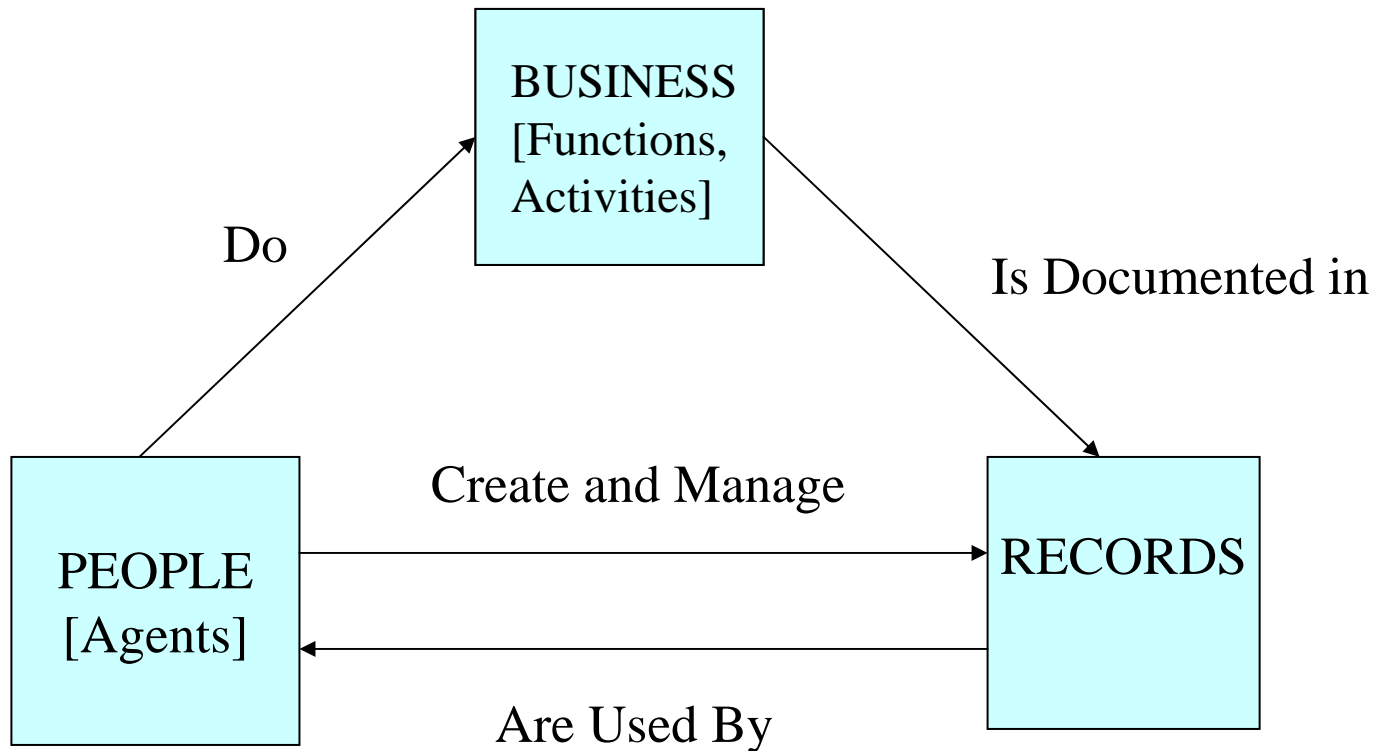
- ⌘ Encoded Archival Context (EAC) standard development – initiated by Yale University, 2001
- ⌘ Developed in tandem with 2nd ed of ISAAR
- ⌘ EAC gives us a means of having online exchange of standardised machine readable ISAAR-compliant descriptions of records creating entities
- ⌘ Draft DTD already used by EU LEAF Project
- ⌘ As EAD is to ISAD, so EAC will be to ISAAR

WHAT ABOUT FUNCTIONS?



- ⌘ Records are created when people or organisations perform functions/activities
- ⌘ Functions are independent entities in their own right that require separate description with links to records and records creators
- ⌘ Functions are not aspects of the life of a records creating entity – on the contrary agencies are often just episodes in the life of a function

THREE RECORDKEEPING ENTITIES



THE FUTURE?



- ⌘ More archives need to make use of **both** ISAAR (CPF) and ISAD (G)
- ⌘ There is a proposal for the ICA to develop a 3rd international standard for describing functions and activities, 2004-2008
- ⌘ 'Records are not passive objects to be described retrospectively. Rather, they are agents of action, active participants in business activity that can only be described through a series of parallel and iterative processes.' (Barbara Reed)

Some Useful Sites



⌘ <http://www.archivists.org.au/busrec>

⌘ <http://leaf-eu.org>

⌘ <http://www.hmc.gov.uk/icacds/icacds.htm>