

## **The Benefits of Planning:**

### **Cataloging the Vertical Files of the Anton Brees Carillon Library**

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**Abstract:** In 2013, Bok Tower Gardens was awarded a Council on Library and Information Resources Cataloging Hidden Special Collections & Archives Grant to catalog the vertical files of the Anton Brees Carillon Library. This paper will discuss the key elements of laying the groundwork for this project and how the careful consideration of software selection, processing and cataloging standards, and future access to and dissemination of the information prior to the project's start can lead to a smoother, more successful overall project.

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In 2013, Bok Tower Gardens (BTG) was awarded a Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) Cataloging Hidden Special Collections & Archives Grant to catalog the vertical files of the Anton Brees Carillon Library – a unique collection encompassing more than 80 linear feet and 40 boxes of materials related to the carillon (an instrument of at least 23 bells in chromatic series) and the professionals that play them. This targeted collection is only a portion of what is often considered one of the world's largest collections of carillon related materials, which includes a wide array of resources [Figure 1]. The receipt of the grant was the

culmination of years of planning and prepping and one significant step towards the successful processing of this hidden collection. The careful consideration of software selection, processing and cataloging standards, and future access to and dissemination of the information prior to the project's start promises a smoother, more successful overall project.

*[Figure 1]*

Pre-Grant

Although flexibility is essential in any project, especially when working with hidden collections, project planners and managers should take time before project implementation to make adequate preparations. While not every question can be addressed prior to a project, this important pre-planning serves as a valuable exercise to save time and resources later. Planning may involve thinking about the audience for the collection and how they will interact with the materials; imagining how the users will want to access the materials; considering time spent for physical arrangement versus time for thorough description; and realizing how much can be done in-house versus any outsourcing needs. Considering these factors in advance will help decrease interruptions to the project workflow and streamline processing even when unexpected challenges arise.

The planning for the Anton Brees Carillon Library (ABCL) project began even before the grant application was complete. For several years, the Librarian, named as the Principal Investigator (PI) in the grant, was evaluating and arranging the library's collection in preparation for a large scale cataloging project. Because of this initial collection evaluation, two collections were ultimately selected for inclusion in the CLIR grant: the vertical files of the ABCL and the archives of the Guild of Carillonneurs in North America (GCNA). The inclusion of the

GCNA archives in the project was due in large part to an official agreement brokered by the Librarian for the housing of the archives at BTG. Though the GCNA archives have been housed in the ABCL since 1993, no formal agreement existed until 2012. That agreement only provided for minimal care and processing for the GCNA archives since the ABCL staffing at the time was .5 FTE. At the time of the agreement, a recommendation was made to the GCNA to streamline their holdings to focus exclusively on their history and story of their professional association. The scope of the existing GCNA collection overlapped many of the ABCL files, so this recommendation would allow for collection right-sizing, conserving space, and shifting redundant materials from the GCNA to either fill gaps in the ABCL collection or dispose of appropriately.

#### Grant Writing Process

During the grant writing process, several decisions needed to be made based on work done in prior years. The CLIR Hidden Collections grant provided funding for the greatest collection need: people. The Librarian's time with the collections clearly showed that the only way to undertake a successful project was through more hands helping with the collections. While volunteers offered support in the collections, the scale of processing the vertical files and GCNA archives required more dedicated staffing. The first request in the grant was to increase the Librarian's hours to full time, allowing a 50% commitment to the grant, hiring a second full time employee dedicated to the project, and hiring a series of interns over three summers.

The grant application also required certain details concerning the software and processing plans for the project. Since the ABCL had recently taken advantage of acquiring a Quick Start version of OCLC's CONTENTdm through state access to OCLC's FirstSearch database,

it was determined that this software would be best suited to the project. Not only did CONTENTdm provide customization possibilities for the unique aspects of the collection, but it also allowed for easy uploading to OCLC's WorldCat database making the newly created records almost instantly available to an international audience. The hope was also to provide users with one place to access all of the collection's digital assets rather than parsing various holdings out to separate databases. CONTENTdm also offered the hosting services that the ABCL needed. Since the Quick Start version only allowed limited entries, the request was made to upgrade the subscription, a significant cost, and slowly have the Gardens take over the annual cost of the product.

Since the collections are active, continuing to grow each year, a method had to be found that could adequately describe what existed while allowing for future growth. Finding Aids were selected as the means to that end, using EAD standards to encode the information. This would allow a resource to be created for the GCNA archives, each of the individual carillons documented in the ABCL, the various bell foundries, and any individuals of significance. Items that fell outside of the scope of these broad categories (such as audio recordings or other ephemera) would be cataloged individually. Since one of the goals of CLIR projects is to create interoperability with other collections, EAD was selected as the most commonly used finding aid standard.

#### After Grant Award Notice

The grant application process took several months to complete. While the Librarian was hoping that the project would be accepted, work continued as usual in the library until news was received one way or another. When the letter arrived in December, the Librarian set the

project in motion, beginning with the hiring of the Library Special Projects Assistant (PA). After a relatively smooth, though delayed, hiring process, the work of implementing the project plan could finally begin in earnest.

First, a “pre-inventory” was conducted to get a broad sense of the materials in the collection so that hierarchies for the finding aids could be created. These hierarchies would also serve to guide the physical arrangement of the collections as processing began. Though in many archival collections physical arrangement is part of the structure of the collection, the ABCL and GCNA collections were under no such special limitations. Plans were made to maximize space and consolidate holdings. Processing space was also limited where the materials are held, so a solution for the major work of processing needed to be made. Bearing in mind the condition of the materials, the fact that the materials were located on two different floors, and that the spaces are often used for tours, a physical workflow was created to use a lesser used archive space. This workflow also determined the order the materials would be handled to minimize reprocessing.

Since the ABCL did not have any existing tools for creating EAD finding aids, research was done on various no- or low-cost options. By reaching out to the archives community through various listservs and forums, including CLIR, Society of American Archivists, Connecting to Collections, Gold Coast Archives, and the Florida Opening Archives program, numerous suggestions were received and further researched including Archon, Archivists Toolkit, ArchivesSpace, PastPerfect, Excel, and Access.

It is worthwhile to mention that as this project started and research was conducted, EAD 3 had not yet been released. The PA worked with John Nemmers, Descriptive & Technical

Services Archivist at the University of Florida and Co-Chair of the Florida Opening Archives Program, to determine the best course of action regarding this update. Although the plans for the new edition of EAD were to include some drastic changes, its pending release meant that there would not be as many tools available using EAD 3, much less ones that would suit the needs and limitations of this project. Ultimately, it was determined to forego EAD 3 and proceed with creating finding aids using EAD 2002, deciding that it was better to have the records created using the current version of EAD, and that they could always be migrated in the future.

As with many smaller collecting institutions, many of the most popular tools for creating EAD finding aids were not feasible options. Though open source, software databases such as Archon, Archivist's Toolkit, and ArchivesSpace require knowledge of computer programming, investment of funds, or server storage space and support. In order to implement EAD Finding Aids in our collections, we needed to investigate more readily accessible options.

The PI and PA decided that the idea of using Microsoft Access had much merit. Access is preinstalled on nearly every computer with a Windows operating system, including those at Bok Tower Gardens, and thus was available at no additional cost. When installed on a shared server, an Access database allows multiple users access at the same time. The software also includes the ability to create forms, making the input of information easier than an Excel spreadsheet, and information can be exported in a variety of formats including Excel spreadsheets, XML, PDF, and text and Word documents. The team was also excited that, should the notion of using Access be a successful one, it would be a simple solution that could be shared with other libraries and archives, a primary goal stated in the grant application.

Further research was conducted to see if such a database already existed, rather than needing to create one from scratch. This research uncovered that the National Library of Medicine offers a free Access database to members of the History of Medicine Finding Aids consortium<sup>1</sup>. Although Bok Tower Gardens is not a member of this consortium, Mr. John Rees, Archivist and Digital Resource Manager at the National Library of Medicine, was kind enough to share their database anyway. He explained that although they have switched to a web application and no longer use the Access database, it should still be an effective tool for creating EAD finding aids.

The Access database from the National Library of Medicine proved to be a valuable tool, allowing the user to input information into unintimidating forms and automatically creating EAD finding aids that could be exported in XML. No solution is perfect, of course, and because the database had been created for use in medical libraries, it needed to be reworked to suit the needs of the ABCL's unique collections.

Some of the changes needed were merely cosmetic, such as removing the National Library of Medicine's logo and replacing it with Bok Tower Garden's [Figure 2]. Others required deeper changes that tested the limits of the PA's coding skills to assure that both the visible and behind-the-scenes elements were correct and without error. The PA continued to work with Mr. Nemmers to ensure that the EAD output followed the "Best Practice Guidelines for the Implementation of EAD Version 2002 in Florida Institutions<sup>2</sup>," a standard selected for use in the grant application process.

*[Figure 2]*

The PA also added the functionality to export the finding aids as a PDF. With this added feature, an organization or individual can now input their information into the Access database easily using its convenient input forms, and, with this single input, can export their EAD finding aids into XML and/or PDF with a single click [Figure 3]. The resultant export can then be shared or uploaded in other systems for any number of other uses.

*[Figure 3]*

Additionally, the instructional manual that had accompanied the original NLM database had not been updated to reflect later changes in the database. This created minor obstacles in learning the nuances of the database which were quickly overcome, and a new version of the instruction manual was created.

Once the questions of where the Finding Aids would live and how the EAD Finding Aids would be created were answered, attention could be turned to the rather daunting task of physical processing and arrangement. Three interns were hired for the first summer of the grant project to assist with processing the collection. Following the workflow created by the PI and PA, the interns started by moving the entire GCNA collection from its two locations to the temporary working location. Items that would clearly be shifted into the ABCL files were set aside, while the sorting of the remaining GCNA collection commenced.

Immediately, the PA needed to devise a system to allow multiple interns working on different days to easily sort the materials while always knowing where the last person left off and where work should begin. The working space being utilized was a large table, around which the team would sit, each with a stack of documents to be sorted into the predetermined series. In order to keep the delineation of the different series clear, the table was sectioned off using



masking tape and each section marked so that everyone sitting around the table was putting the materials into the proper series [Figure 4].

*[Figure 4]*

During the first few days of sorting through the GCNA collection, it was quickly discovered that this hidden collection was not as simple as it first appeared. The Guild activities and collected materials were much more complex, and it became clear that the hierarchy initially created would not be the best solution for arrangement. The use of the collection by the end user was constantly kept in mind during the process. Exercising flexibility and remembering the old adage that getting it right is more important than getting it done quickly, the hierarchy was readjusted and sorting was corrected.

After the initial broad sort by series, each series was then sorted by subseries. This stage of the process raised many interesting questions and challenges to consider moving forward:

- Documenting copyright permission to the GCNA vs. from the GCNA;
- Retaining the personal experiences of individuals attending the annual congresses while limiting space-consuming and unnecessary duplicates;
- Storing music manuscripts that do not fit in the present vertical cabinets;
- Accounting for gaps in the collection, especially in the later years as more business was being conducted electronically; and
- Capturing the grey areas of the organization which often blur not only the responsibilities of different individuals and committees but also their professional and personal lives.

Anyone who has processed an archival collection knows many interesting items will be uncovered when sorting through archival materials, and this collection was no exception. The team learned more than they ever expected to about the GCNA, the intriguing personal lives of the members of the Guild, and, of course, bells, bells, bells, and more bells. Countless items were discovered that were unrelated to the scope of the collection yet had been retained simply because they contained the image of a bell. In fact, a new processing section was created for just such items: “Oh look, there’s a bell!” [Figure 5]

*[Figure 5]*

The first summer of the project, with the assistance of the three interns, approximately 60 linear feet of materials were processed, including the most at risk materials which were being housed in deteriorating boxes. The physical processing of materials also included the re-housing of items in acid-free folders as needed. Doing this during the sorting process allowed for appropriate grouping of materials and descriptive labeling of the new folders.

After the sorting of the GCNA collection was complete, the materials were moved back into their vertical filing cabinets, with some room left for growth for this active collection. Then the sorting of the second portion, the ABCL vertical files, began. These materials were processed so that a finding aid would be created for each of the carillons in North America, as well as many foreign carillons, notable carillonneurs and members of the GCNA about whom the ABCL has information, each bell foundry which produces carillon bells, and a smattering of other topics which are related to the carillon.

Creating Finding Aids

As the physical processing of the collections advances, the creation of the finding aids will commence. Some finding aids for individual carillons were created while the summer interns were employed. This allowed them to gain experience with the process, adding to the skill set they would be able to list for future employment. The interns each provided valuable testing services, too, since they used the developed instructional manual to create the finding aids in the Access database. This process brought several issues to light that could then be fixed and retested prior to intensive finding aid creation. The creation of finding aids will also include development of controlled subject headings, additional research to properly represent the instruments, individuals, and foundries in the “Biographical and Historical Note” section of the finding aids, and, of course, the inputting of the information into the Access database.

Though CONTENTdm was selected to house the final finding aids, initial testing proved that its functionality for finding aids is rather limited at this point. Conversations with their representatives confirmed that, once uploaded using the finding aid wizard, an XML finding aid cannot be updated or altered later. The same is true of a PDF that has been uploaded as a “compound object”. This poses a significant problem since the collections at the ABCL are still active and will require updating after initial input. After some additional experimentation and further conversations, it was determined that a PDF uploaded as a “single object” can be replaced. It was this discovery that prompted the development in the Access database for PDF export functionality. Uploading PDFs as a single object in CONTENTdm will allow the updating of finding aids while still retaining the metadata and static URL for the item.

As processing continues, all finding aids will be contained in a single CONTENTdm collection. This will allow all of the finding aids to be fully searchable. Once the finding aid

collection has been established, the finding aids will then be shared via OCLC's Digital Collection Gateway onto WorldCat. This method should also allow for future linking between finding aids and any digital items created that are referenced therein.

### Looking Forward

With an eye to the future, the PI and PA have also discussed other avenues and outlets for the information contained within the newly created finding aids to become available not only to the carillonner and academic communities but also to the public-at-large. Some of the options being considered include seeking out a partner to serve as an additional host for the finding aids such as the Florida Virtual School (home of the Florida Opening Archives program) or the University of Florida, and the addition/creation of another type of web venue such as a wiki or blog. Attendance at regional meetings has also revealed possible outlets including adding documented information to Wikipedia through the University of Miami's "Remixing Archival Metadata Project."

The mission of this project is to bring a hidden collection to light, increasing the global knowledge about carillons and drawing users into the other collections held at Bok Tower Gardens. The Gardens is committed to being a leader in carillon scholarship, and this is one giant step towards that goal. As more items are processed and brought to light, new research avenues can be discovered. Links between previously unknown facts and people can be made, and a new era of discovery can begin. The project also lends itself to help link carillon research to other subject interests such as engineering, general music scholarship, and art. Through flexibility in processing methodology and always keeping our end users in mind, planning and

implementation of this project will assure that these materials can ring out to users for many generations to come.

#### References

<sup>1</sup> National Library of Medicine: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/hmd/consortium/about.html>

<sup>2</sup> Nemmers, John R. "Best Practice Guidelines for the Implementation of EAD Version 2002 in Florida Institutions". March 2006.