Extensible Processing for Archives and Special Collections: Reducing Processing Backlogs

Daniel A. Santamaria

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A 2010 OCLC report found that an internet-accessible finding aid existed for only 44 percent of archival collections. Undescribed collections are essentially hidden from users, and much of the blame can be assigned to the strain of processing backlogs. Extensible processing offers an alternative, allowing collection managers to first establish a baseline level of access to all holdings, then conduct additional processing based on user demand and ongoing assessment. Adhering to archival principles and standards, this flexible approach emphasizes decision-making and prioritization. Santamaria, recipient of the Society of American Archivists' 2013 Coker Award for innovative developments in archival description, has overseen the processing of thousands of linear feet of organizational records and personal papers. Showing how technical services staff can reassert control of collections while improving user experience, in this invaluable book he

- Lays out the six key principles of extensible processing, from creating a baseline level of access to all collections material and crafting standardized, structured descriptions to managing archival materials in the aggregate
- Provides a start-to-finish workflow adaptable to any collection, with practical tips such as using collection assessment surveys to reduce backlog
- Advises how to limit physical handling and processing through a holistic approach
- Explains the use of Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACS) and Encoded Archival Description (EAD)
- Covers recent developments in the digitization of archives, including alternative strategies like low-resolution scanning and repurposing existing metadata
- Presents several case studies, ranging from a one person shop to large universities, that include examples of processes, systems, software, and metadata

Archivists and special collections librarians will find in this book the tools, confidence, and freedom to improve user experience through extensible processing

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