

Communications

Archival Descriptive Standards and the Archival Community: A Retrospective, 1996

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This paper is written as a contribution to the better understanding of the involvement of the Canadian archival professional and institutional communities in the development of archival descriptive standards.¹ Particular attention is paid to *Rules for Archival Description*² (*RAD*) and the MARC standards. The paper does not address the impact these standards have, or are going to have, on individual archival institutions' processes and procedures related to archival holdings control because these matters are unique and dependent on a host of factors pertaining to each individual institution, including its sponsor, policies, mandate, manner of working, resources, and relative size. The paper does pay attention to the general infrastructure of the archival community that created the standards. It attempts to give a historical perspective on the development of archival descriptive and related standards in Canada and abroad and to explain the relationships between them in the three-dimensional framework of content, structural, and value standards. Such a framework illustrates the interdependency of the standards and the relative importance of each.

In adopting the type of standards discussed in this paper, it is important to understand the background of their development to enable an institution to make better informed decisions about future actions and strategies relating to them. Thus, the paper also pays attention to the structures, representation, reporting, and the roles and responsibilities of the organizations that developed the standards. Understanding the infrastructure allows an institution to play an active, rather than passive, role in the maintenance and further enhancement of these standards.

In the retrospective portion, the author, having served as the National Archives of Canada's observer on the Planning Committee on Descriptive Standards, examines the factors that influenced the current version of *RAD*.

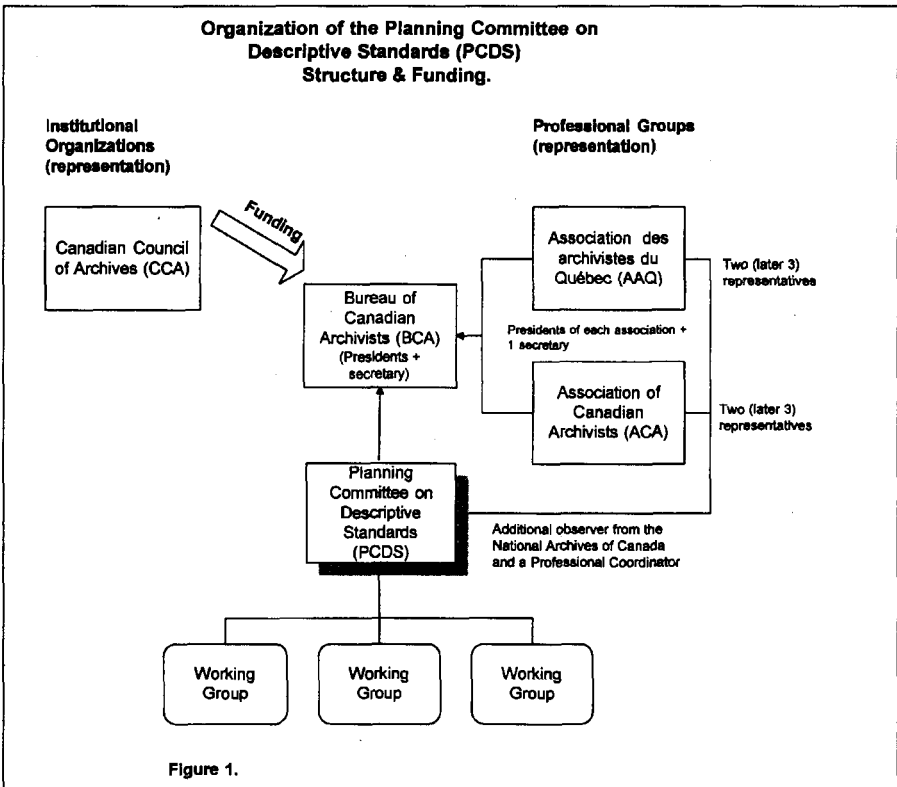
Rules for Archival Description (RAD) Development: Retrospective

Responsible Body

The responsible body for the development of *RAD* was the Planning Committee on Descriptive Standards (PCDS), a committee of the Bureau of Canadian Archivists

(BCA). Its mandate was to implement the recommendations of the Canadian Working Group on Archival Descriptive Standards as published in its *Toward Descriptive Standards*.³

Initially, the membership of the PCDS consisted of two representatives from each of the two professional associations in Canada, the Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA) and the Association des archivistes du Québec (AAQ). This was later expanded to three members each from these associations. A full-time professional coordinator was added to the PCDS for coordinating the work of its working groups and to liaise amongst them and the PCDS. An observer from the National Archives of Canada rounded out the Committee. The funding of the project, including the salary of the Project Coordinator, came through grants from the Canadian Council of Archives, a body representing archival institutions in Canada with representation from provincial councils. (See **figure 1** for the general structure of the PCDS, its membership, representation, and funding.)



General Approach to the Development of RAD

When the Planning Committee on Descriptive Standards was set up it decided that, within the guidelines and recommendations given by the Canadian Working Group on Archival Descriptive Standards in its *Toward Descriptive Standards* (Chapter Four,

Section F), *RAD* should be developed chapter by chapter or section by section if related sections could be treated collectively, with each chapter reviewed and commented upon by the archival community before finishing it. This would permit the publication of each chapter or section as soon as it was ready.

In addition, the PCDS recognized that for the development of the chapters for description of various media, the expertise of media specialists would be required. Thus, for each media chapter a working group was established to develop the relevant chapters under the general guidelines of the PCDS and with the assistance of its Project Coordinator. Each media chapter went through developmental stages which, for the purpose of this paper, are summarized as follows:

1. A working group was established by selecting a chair (appointed by the PCDS) and members with expertise in the medium in question. Although not an explicitly stated policy, each working group had at least one employee of the National Archives of Canada and there was an attempt to balance the working group membership with members from the English- and French-language archival communities.
2. The working group drafted the new chapter within the guidelines given it by the PCDS (each working group had terms of reference) and in conformity with the general principles established in Chapter One. The working group was given three to six months to accomplish the work and to submit draft rules and a report to the PCDS. The working group was also told how many meetings it could have to accomplish its work.
3. The PCDS reviewed the report and the draft chapter at its next scheduled meeting and, if needed (i.e., if there was disagreement on points and/or rules), prepared a reply to the working group.
4. The corrected draft chapter and report were translated and sent out to the Canadian archival community for review and comment. (In the beginning, six months was allotted for comment, later changed to three months.)
5. The working group reviewed the comments from the community and the PCDS and, when necessary, met with the PCDS to discuss outstanding issues.
6. After all issues were resolved, the chapter went for translation, typesetting, and publication.

This process took about two years to complete each chapter. The second part of *RAD*, containing the chapters for access points for names and for references, was developed by the PCDS itself. Chapters Twenty and Twenty-one, comprising the Introduction to Part Two and the Choice of Access Points chapter, were prepared by the Working Group on Choice of Access Points.

It was acknowledged that this approach had advantages and disadvantages. The major advantage was seen to be that the Canadian archival community, having been consulted and having worked on each chapter itself through representation on working groups, would abide by the standard once it was finished. There would be very little need for convincing the community to adopt the standard.

The major disadvantage was recognized to be that the process of review could become so cumbersome as to break down. In other words, the length of time each

chapter would take to bring to completion would make keeping the momentum of the development of the whole very difficult. In fact, both these predictions came true. In addition, other major unforeseen developments resulted in further disadvantages and advantages.

The first disadvantage, which became evident early in the second year of the work of the committee, was the learning curve needed for members of the committee and its working groups. Very few had experience with writing rules and of applying them. Although there are and were conventions for preparing certain kinds of finding aids, the use of a code for the description of archival holdings is not a tradition in archives. Writing rules is a speciality akin to writing law. Thus the process of developing archival descriptive standards, although helped immensely by the initial decision to base them on the *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules*, second edition revised (AACR2R),⁴ was an exercise in learning as much as it was in managing the development of the archival rules.

The very first working group and its "Report of the Working Group on the Fonds d'archives Level" was already challenged because its proposals were not seen to be in line with the principles of AACR2R. The chapter was rewritten and became the general rules in *RAD* Chapter One. Similar problems were encountered throughout the development of *RAD*. With each chapter, new demands were made on the issue of compatibility with AACR2R.

How much and to what extent is compatibility with AACR2R important? Decisions were made on a case-by-case basis. As *RAD* developed, decisions made on a chapter under development were reviewed and changed in the following chapters. This resulted in chapters already published getting out of line with chapters that were published later. That is, there started to appear conflicting rules from chapter to chapter. Also, rules developed in media chapters turned out to be in many cases of a general nature, applicable to all media. This meant that these rules would have to be incorporated in Chapter One, General Rules, rather than in each of the media chapters.

When the situation became unacceptable, the PCDS decided to:

1. Rewrite Chapter One, incorporating the previously separate Chapter Thirteen (on multilevel description) and organize the new chapter so that there would be rules for each level of description, e.g., fonds, series, file, and item. That is to say, there would be sections and rules that would begin with wording such as "At the fonds level... [do this]"; "At the series level...[do this]"; etc.
2. Hold the unpublished but ready-for-printing media chapters so that they could be checked against, and rewritten where necessary to conform with, the new Chapter One. Chapter Two, on multiple media fonds, was also rewritten to conform with Chapter One.

The new Chapters One and Two were published as soon as they were ready. All unpublished and remaining media chapters were meant to be held until the end of the development process, partially reversing the initial development strategy of *RAD*. All chapters have now been published.

The advantage of having the archival community abide by the standard because of its involvement in its development remains valid, although considerably diminished

with the decisions taken as outlined above without prior consultation with the community. The situation did not improve towards the end with additional such decisions being taken by the PCDS alone because of time constraints and reduced available resources for the project. Ironically, this occurred when the learning curve of all involved was beginning to peak. For example, it was realized and re-emphasized that **provenance** is truly the pivot around which all archival description revolves. This was nothing new, but when this was contrasted and compared with what this meant in interpreting the relevance of AACR2R rules to archival description, much of what was assumed before about compatibility became clearer. The provenance criteria applied against this background eased the decision-making process.

For example, it became clear that the concepts of *authorship* and *creatorship* were fundamentally different. It was not clear (not made explicit) that the idea of authorship cannot be subsumed under the definition of creator. *RAD* had obfuscated the difference. It had one definition for creator (referring it to the definition of provenance). There was no definition for author. Consequently, it was decided that the *RAD* glossary should distinguish between these two concepts. It separated them by giving definitions for each using the AACR2R definition of author and keeping the provenance definition as given.

This focusing on provenance also led to a clearer differentiation between the material resulting from the actions of authorship and creatorship. The *recordness* of archival material distinguishes it from other kinds of material. The *RAD* glossary thus introduced a definition for **record** that defines it as "A document made or received in the course of the conduct of affairs and preserved" and a **document** as "Recorded information."

With this straightened out, the PCDS also decided that archival description distinguishes itself from bibliographic description (as a technique of description) by the nature of the approach. Where AACR2R begins with rules for single-item description and also has provisions for collective description in its Chapter Thirteen, archival description begins with collective description before divisions of that collectivity into smaller units of description, with item description tagged on at the end and at the lowest level. In addition, since archival description must preserve context, *RAD* therefore made the technique of multilevel description mandatory, all in recognition of the importance of the context which is maintained by the linking of the levels in a multilevel hierarchy.

As a result of this exercise, it was concluded also that certain elements of description could be identified as "bibliographic" in nature. These elements are more relevant at lower levels of description than at the higher levels, with the least relevance at the fonds level. Elements such as the Edition Statement (in fact, the whole Edition Area of description), the Statement of Responsibility (geared as it is to the concept of "authorship" transcribed from a title page), the Series Statement (i.e., in *RAD* called the Publishers Series Statement), etc., it was decided, are not archival elements of description *per se*, and only became so when material that has been published becomes part of a fonds. Consequently, these elements were no longer allowed at the fonds level of description.

The changed perspective made the rules more mature and focused and more applicable to archival description, but, at the same time, because of the developmental

procedure decided upon at the beginning (i.e., the chapter by chapter publishing approach), played havoc with the internal consistency of *RAD*. Thus, it has become imperative that the loose chapters in the current version of *RAD* be consolidated in a second edition (or perhaps better, a first edition revised, or simply a first edition) which would remove the inconsistencies and contradictions in a thorough editorial revision. It also should be published in a bound volume to signify a finished product and to make copyright issues and sales easier to administer. Only at that stage will *RAD* become used in a consistent manner throughout the Canadian archival community and across archival repositories because it would then be possible for the rules to be interpreted and applied consistently.

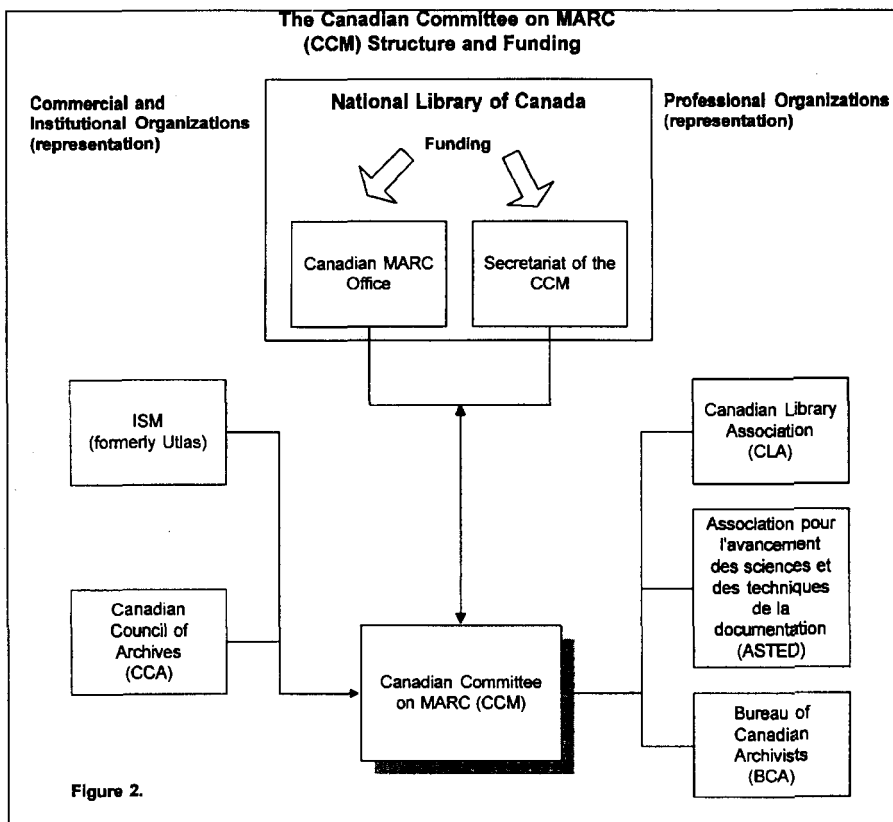
The mandate of the PCDS ran out at the end of the 1995/96 fiscal year (31 March 1996); the last meeting of the PCDS took place 9-11 February 1996. In the meantime, its successor body has been established. It is the Canadian Committee on Archival Description (CCAD). It held its first meeting in May 1996.

Related Standards: MARC

The Machine Readable Cataloguing (MARC) formats provide a standardized structure for the machine-readable form of the descriptive data so that the information may be transported from one machine system to another when these systems adhere to this communications standard. It is irrelevant whether this exchange of records takes place on-line, on tape, disk, in a LAN, or on the Internet.

In other words, the CAN/MARC formats contain the "buckets" for holding the descriptive information in machine-readable form.⁵ Thus, to implement the result of descriptions prepared with *RAD* in an automated environment, the buckets for the elements of descriptions and their access points have to be defined in the MARC formats so that these elements may be easily found and the information placed in the various buckets consistently. The buckets are called fields and subfields in the MARC formats and they become unique data identifiers in each machine-readable record for each element of the description. The nomenclature used for *RAD* elements of description must conform with those used in the MARC formats.

The Canadian Committee on MARC (CCM) is responsible for changes to the Canadian MARC formats. The Committee's members are representatives of the parties that use these standards. They are the professional organizations and the institutions (i.e., libraries and archives) as well as the bibliographic utility Information Systems Management Corporation (ISM), formerly Utlas. The Secretariat of the CCM is located in, and maintained by, the National Library of Canada, with the Secretary a National Library employee. The Canadian MARC Office maintains the published MARC standards. This office too is located at the National Library of Canada and is staffed with two National Library professionals, one of whom sits as a permanent member on the CCM. The Committee meets twice a year in conjunction with the annual meetings of the two professional library associations in Canada, the Canadian Library Association (CLA) and the Association pour l'avancement des sciences et des techniques de la documentation (ASTED). The Canadian Council of Archives and the Bureau of Canadian Archivists are represented on the CCM through a single representative (see **figure 2**).



In the absence of any formally accepted rules for archival description, the American archival community had defined requirements for its US/MARC formats for what they called “archival practice” through the Society of American Archivists’ National Information Systems Task Force (NISTF) initiative in the late seventies and early eighties.⁶ Steve Hensen’s *Archives, Personal Papers, and Manuscripts (APPM)* first draft was published in 1983.⁷ The second edition was published in 1989.⁸ *APPM* is an interpretation of AACR2R Chapter Four, Manuscripts (including manuscript collections). These rules are used for cataloguing by libraries that have archival collections or single manuscripts and by a number of historical societies for similar materials. *APPM* has not been accepted by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) for its records control. NARA is contributing *APPM* records to RLIN as an experiment and strictly as an “extra.” Cataloguing with *APPM* is not part of NARA’s operational system(s).

In the United States there are thus two traditions, the records administration and management tradition on the one hand, and the historical manuscript tradition on the other. *RAD* incorporates and has codified both traditions, but favours the first in many of its definitions and in the approach to descriptive techniques. The latter American “tradition” is much closer to the cataloguing practices of libraries in cataloguing library material.

From the wholesale acceptance by the Committee on Representation in Machine-Readable Form of Bibliographic Data (MARBI), the American equivalent to the CCM, of the NISTF proposals for incorporating the American "archival practices" into the US/MARC formats, a subsequent subset was extracted which became known as *MARC for Archives and Manuscripts: The AMC Format* or MARC:AMC for short.⁹ It was this US format that was identified by the Canadian Working Group on Archival Descriptive Standards of the Bureau of Canadian Archivists (BCA) in its report *Toward Descriptive Standards*¹⁰ (recommendation 28) as the standard to be examined for adoption or adaptation in Canada. Unfortunately, the agenda for changes to the format over time was dominated by the large American utilities such as the Research Library Information Network (RLIN), which was the principle utility that took it upon itself to serve the American archival community by accommodating MARC:AMC records, and the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC). It is these utilities that have generally ignored the archival rules as the directing standard for changes to the MARC format with, at times, undesirable effects.

The American provisions, insofar as they were applicable to Canadian archival practices, were incorporated in the Canadian MARC communications format for monographs in 1987. This was done in cooperation with the PCDS. Two of its representatives, Victorin Chabot and Jean Tener, sat on the CCM as observers for the duration of the process of incorporating the American archival requirements. During that same period, Hugo Stibbe sat on the CCM, also as an observer, on behalf of the National Archives of Canada. When the BCA received full member status on the CCM, Hugo Stibbe continued on as its representative.

The incorporation of the American "practices" requirements in our Canadian MARC formats was done on the explicit understanding that when the *Rules for Archival Description* were finished, that document would become the determining and final arbiter of what had to be in the Canadian MARC formats and that any American MARC fields in conflict with the Canadian requirements according to *RAD* would have to be ignored, declared obsolete, or not used.

In December 1994 it appeared that certain events were forcing the submission for incorporating *RAD* requirements in the CAN/MARC formats somewhat prematurely, i.e., before *RAD* was fully completed. The Library of Congress, the British Library, and the National Library of Canada took an initiative to see if the MARC formats of their respective countries could be harmonized and subsequently placed under a common governance. The discussions were started and by December 1995 had reached the stage where the governance issue was going to be on the table. It became clear that, if the Canadian *RAD* requirements were not in the CAN/MARC formats before decisions on harmonization and governance were made, there would be little chance that the *RAD* requirements would become part of the harmonized MARC formats because *RAD* is a national standard as opposed to AACR2R, which is a standard of the Anglo-American community. The submission to the CCM of a comprehensive *RAD* requirement package for the CAN/MARC formats thus became urgent.

A contract was requested from the Canadian Council on Archives for doing the work on the preparation of the package in order to be ready for the June 1995 meeting of the CCM. The urgency of the matter required the National Archives to get involved. The first phase of the contract was let by the National Archives and a package was prepared.

The package was tabled at the June 1995 meeting of the CCM in Calgary, Alberta, and was favourably received. The package was subsequently split into two, one for the descriptive data and one for the fixed field (coded) data because it was thought that the descriptive data requirements, being the ones that are the *RAD* requirements, would fare better. It was believed that they would be more likely acceptable to the CCM for adoption and incorporation in the CAN/MARC formats than the fixed coded data requirements, which could be considered later. The package was again discussed at the fall 1995 meeting of the CCM in Hull, Quebec, where most of the proposals were accepted. Subsequent work by the Canadian MARC Office and the CCA representative, Hugo Stibbe, prepared the package for voting. It was submitted to the CCM and voted on electronically. The whole package was approved just in time for incorporation in the harmonization document as non-negotiable Canadian data element requirements. This document was used in the December 1995 harmonization and governance negotiations meeting held in Washington, DC.

The Canadian proposals, in the meantime, have also been moved to MARBI (the US equivalent to the CCM) for discussion and potential adaption or adoption in the US/MARC formats. The package was tabled at the San Antonio, Texas meeting of MARBI as "MARBI Discussion Paper No. 93."

The Society of American Archivists has a representative on MARBI through its Committee on Archival Information Exchange (CAIE/SAA). The success of the Canadian proposals will hinge on how well they are received by the American archival community because MARBI will most likely listen to its representative, as most other members would not know much about archival practices. A lively debate is already taking place on the American archives listservs on the Internet over Discussion Paper No. 93. Steve Hensen obtained a grant for a meeting of a number of archivists from both sides of the border from the Research Fellowship Program for the Study of Historical Documents of the Bently Library at the University of Michigan. This meeting took place in July 1996.

The Head of the Canadian MARC Office, who is the liaison between the CCM and MARBI, strongly defended the Canadian proposals in San Antonio, Texas. The CCM has kept its promise and has become a strong advocate for the *RAD* requirements in the Canadian MARC formats.

Related Standards: Terminology

As *Rules for Archival Description* was developed, terms used in *RAD* that had a different or special meaning, other than the dictionary meaning, were placed in a Glossary (Appendix D) together with their definitions. Consistent application of rules requires precise understanding of the terminology used by those rules. Therefore, the glossary of terms associated with *RAD* is a very necessary adjunct to the rules because past experience in archival practice had shown that for certain crucial terms, there are as many shades of meaning as there are archivists. Also, because *RAD* is a bilingual document, it was essential that the terminology used carries exactly the same meaning in both English and French.

Some years ago it became apparent that, at the National Archives of Canada, there was a great need for standard terminology in the two official languages, French and

English. The National Archives developed a list of terms internally for its own use, *Archival Terminology = Terminologie archivistique*, which it adopted as an internal National Archives standard in 1992. The initial terms included were those taken from the *RAD* Glossary.

Archival terminology is also a going concern at the international level. The International Council on Archives has developed a *Dictionary of Archival Terminology* with terms and their definitions in English and French and with equivalents in Dutch, German, Italian, Russian, and Spanish. Two editions have appeared; the original was published in 1984 and the second edition in 1988.¹¹ A third, much expanded edition may be out before the XIIIth International Congress on Archives in Beijing, China in September 1996. This third edition incorporates the descriptive standards terminology resulting from the work on the *ISAD(G)* developed by the ICA Ad Hoc Commission on Descriptive Standards (see next section). The Commission has ensured cooperation between its work and that of the Working Group on the Dictionary on Archival Terminology.

International Developments on Archival Descriptive Standards

ICA Ad Hoc Commission on Descriptive Standards

Following the National Archives of Canada-sponsored ICA Invitational Meeting of Experts on Descriptive Standards in October 1988, and following up on the major recommendation made by that meeting (Recommendation One),¹² a consultative meeting of experts was organized by UNESCO and the ICA to produce a long-term plan of action for the development of international descriptive standards for archives. The UNESCO meeting took place in Paris at UNESCO headquarters in 1989. The group was charged with examining existing standards and preparing a statement of principles and a detailed plan for future work. UNESCO was prepared to fund the project and a contract drawn up between the ICA and UNESCO for a two-year term. At its meeting in Wrocław, Poland in September 1990, the ICA Executive formally established the ICA Ad Hoc Commission on Descriptive Standards (ICA/DDS). Shortly thereafter, the Executive Director of the ICA, Charles Kecskeméti, and the National Archivist of Canada, Jean-Pierre Wallot, negotiated an agreement for the location of a secretariat to support the work of the ICA/DDS, to be located in Ottawa in the Office of Archival Standards. The formal agreement was also signed in 1990. The Senior Standards Officer at the National Archives of Canada, Hugo Stibbe, was appointed the Project Director and Secretary of the ICA/DDS. Christopher J. Kitching, the Assistant Secretary (now Secretary) of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts in London, was appointed the Chair of the ICA/DDS. Members were appointed from Canada, France, the United Kingdom, Malaysia, Spain, Sweden, Portugal, and the United States. Later, a member from Australia was added.

The ICA/DDS started its work immediately upon the appointment of its members and a "Statement of Principles Regarding Archival Description" was drafted. The first Plenary of the ICA/DDS was held in Germany, in Höhr-Grenzhausen, near Koblenz, where the Draft Statement of Principles was discussed; a document by Sharon Thibodeau, the member for the United States, summarizing the various approaches taken by the then existing national standards for archival description was

studied; the *ISAD(G): General International Standard Archival Description*¹³ was drafted; and agreement was reached on a work plan and procedures for the approval of draft documents. The existing standards or guidelines studied and summarized in Thibodeau's report were the United Kingdom's *Manual of Archival Description (MAD)*¹⁴ prepared by Michael Cook and Margaret Procter (Gower, 1989), Steve Hensen's *APPM* (mentioned earlier), and *Rules for Archival Description* (BCA, 1990).

At the second Plenary of the ICA/DDS held in Madrid in January 1992, the Draft Statement of Principles was finished and approved for a six-month world wide review period to solicit comments. The Statement of Principles was amended in light of the comments received from the review process and approved.

The Draft Statement of Principles turned out to be pivotal and very controversial. It was translated into all the languages of the ICA and issued as a conference paper for the XII International Congress on Archives in Montréal in September 1992. During the congress an open meeting was held. The meeting was memorable in that it produced heated debate and criticism, particularly from Australian and American archivists who do not agree with the fonds concept which was proposed in the model presented in the Statement. The XII Congress Council also passed a most crucial motion that both praised and supported the work of the ICA/DDS, and agreed to support it further with some degree of priority. At this time the Australian member was added to the ICA/DDS.

The draft *ISAD(G)* was also finished for world wide review at the Plenary in Madrid. At the third Plenary held in Stockholm, Sweden in 1993 this document became the first standard approved for publication after the review process had made the necessary changes in light of the comments received. It was also decided at this meeting not to publish the Statement of Principles because it had served its purpose, namely, to provide the model for the development of the first standard, the *ISAD(G)*.

As a result of the work on the *ISAD(G)* and the comments received on the draft, the commission realized that it had only half a standard. The *ISAD(G)* is a standard description for the archival records or documents (the archival material itself). Many of the comments pointed out that archival description is the description of the documents and the creators of those documents. The *ISAD(G)* did not adequately cover the latter. Thus, the commission decided to take on as its next project a standard description of creators and, at the same time, tackle the as yet unfamiliar topic for archivists of authority control for the names of those creators.

The *ISAAR(CPF): International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons and Families*¹⁵ is the result of that effort. Over the course of two further plenaries, again supported by another bi-annual grant from UNESCO, the *ISAAR(CPF)* was developed, comments solicited, and approved for publication in 1996 at its last meeting in Paris in November 1995.

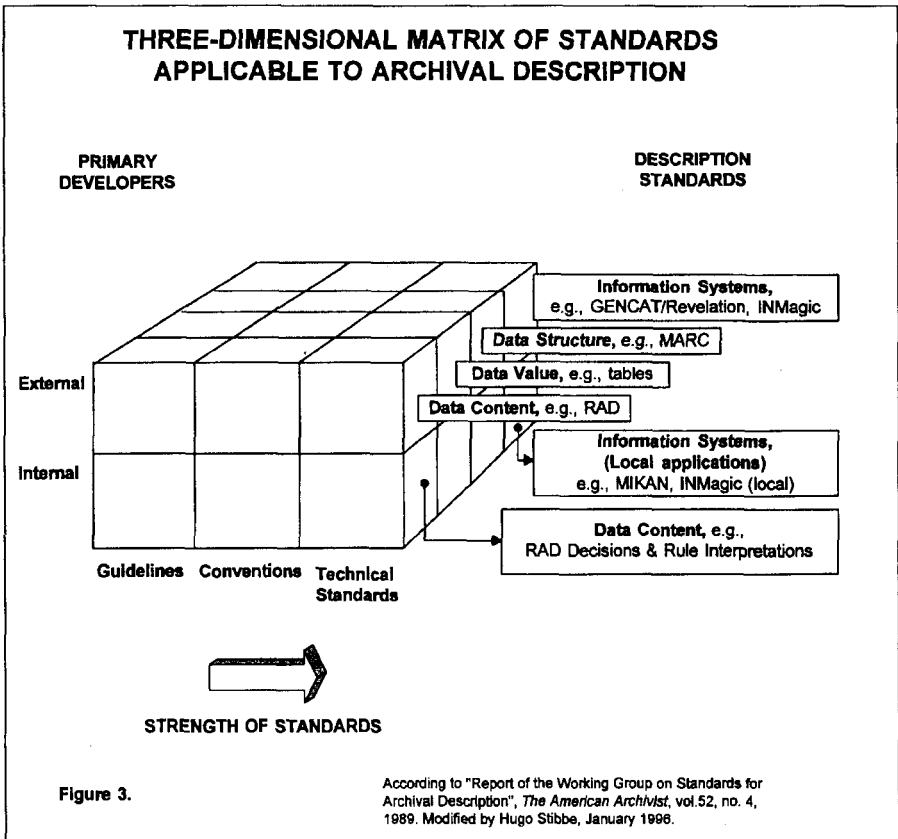
At this last meeting the ICA/DDS continued its discussion on its future and decided to recommend to the ICA Executive that it should disband in favour of a more permanent successor body at the Beijing ICA International Congress in September 1996. The ICA/DDS organized two meetings for the Congress: a joint meeting with the Section on Bibliographic Control of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), the non-governmental organization (NGO) which

meets in the week prior to ICA; and another meeting during the ICA congress itself. The joint meeting with IFLA was about international cooperation between the two NGOs on authority control, the latter an open forum on the work of the ICA/DDS.

Many further standards projects were identified by the ICA/DDS at its last plenary, such as ISADs for specific media, an international communications format for ISAD information in machine-readable form, and an international standard number for authority records (a project in which IFLA is also interested) and for units of description at the highest level, i.e., fonds/collection or series. Some of these projects are already underway in other organizational units of ICA. The successor body would coordinate such work. It would also, if established, look after the maintenance of the published standards and the five-year review cycle for them as recommended by the ICA/DDS.

The Standards and their Relevance to the Description of Holdings at Archival Institutions in Canada

Figure 3 shows the various relationships of the standards discussed in this report in a three-dimensional matrix. If and/or when archival institutions have adopted *RAD* and the MARC formats, all standards shown in figure 3 are of importance. Except for the manuals or other documentation developed internally at archival institutions, all standards are developed and maintained externally. For example, interpretation manuals of *RAD* and local implementations or configurations of standard software packages such as the local implementation of *Gencat/Advanced Revelation* at the National Archives called *MIKAN*, or a local implementation of the commercial software DBMS called *INMagic*, are local standards.



The development of standards is never "finished." When standards are actively used by a community, they are continually revised in response to a variety of factors. These include changes in the way things are done in that community; changes initiated in response to the arrival of new technologies, allowing new ways of doing things; changes because of evolving theory; changes as a result of rule interpretations emerging from the use of the rules in a practical, operational environment; and changes triggered by the development of related standards, such as international standards that affect those at the national level.

An organization that uses standards must understand not only where these standards come from, but must also understand the total infrastructure and environment in which the standards were developed. This type of knowledge makes it possible to respond to the changes in a timely, controlled, and planned manner. It saves the user from unpleasant surprises and allows the institution to foresee and even get involved in the changes so as to be able to plan for the orderly implementation of these changes, affording valuable breathing space for the planning and implementation process to take place.

In the international arena, the Canadian archival community, through representation by the National Archives, the CCA, and the BCA, had the opportunity to host the secretariat of the ICA/DDS and provide leadership and coordination. This helped the *ISAD(G)* and *ISAAR(CPF)* fall well within the general approach and outline of *RAD*, the standard of description used in Canada by the Canadian archival community. This means that, although *RAD* will have to adjust to the ISADs in some future edition, if it purports to follow the international standard, the adjustment will not be radical and therefore not painful.

The same may be said for the related MARC standards. Here too, the Canadian archival community was actively involved in formulating the archival requirements in the CAN/MARC formats. These requirements were *RAD* driven. Direct involvement was necessary because some subjective decisions had to be made regarding the most efficient implementation of particular requirements where more than one option was available.

In conclusion, the knowledge and experience that the Canadian archival community gained from this process and the contributions it was able to make to the development of these standards is probably well worth the effort and investment. Without the knowledge and experience gained by the many individual archivists involved, and subsequent seminars and paper presentations to teach *RAD*, it would have been more difficult to implement *RAD* and its accompanying systems in Canada in such a short time. Witness the many finding aids that are published and systems that are implemented in archival institutions, as well as Canadian archives Internet home pages containing descriptions which are *RAD* compliant. As well, the learning curve to use *RAD* and associated systems would in all likelihood have been much longer and the costs of familiarizing staff so that they could work with *RAD* would probably also have been much higher.

List of Acronyms Used in this Article

AACR2R	<i>Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, Second Edition 1988 Revision</i>
AAQ	Association des archivistes du Québec
ACA	Association of Canadian Archivists
APPM	<i>Archives, Personal Papers, and Manuscripts: A Cataloging Manual for Archival Repositories, Historical Societies, and Manuscript Libraries</i>
ASTED	Association pour l'avancement des sciences et des techniques de la documentation
BCA	Bureau of Canadian Archivists
CAIE/SAA	Committee of Archival Information Exchange of the Society of American Archivists
CCA	Canadian Council of Archives
CCAD	Canadian Committee on Archival Description
CCM	Canadian Committee on MARC

CLA	Canadian Library Association
DBMS	Data Base Management System
ICA/DDS	Ad Hoc Commission on Descriptive Standards (of the International Council on Archives)
ICA	International Council on Archives
IFLA	International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions
ISAAR (CPF)	<i>ISAAR(CPF): International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons and Families</i>
ISAD(G)	<i>ISAD(G): General International Standard Archival Description</i>
MAD	<i>Manual of Archival Description</i>
MARBI	Committee of the American Library Association on the Representation in Machine Readable Form of Bibliographic Information (a committee comprising representatives from the Library and Information Technology Association [LITA] and the Reference and Adult Services Division [RASD] of the American Library Association [ALA]). MARBI is the equivalent of the Canadian Committee on MARC (CCM), votes on all changes to the US/MARC formats, and serves as the chief sounding board for the Library of Congress Network Development and MARC Standards Office.
MARC	Machine Readable Cataloguing
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration (of the United States)
NGO	Non-governmental organization, e.g., ICA, IFLA
NISTF	National Information Systems Task Force (of the Society of American Archivists)
OCLC	Online Computer Library Center
PCDS	Planning Committee on Descriptive Standards (of the Bureau of Canadian Archivists)
RAD	<i>Rules for Archival Description</i>
RLIN	Research Libraries Information Network

Notes

- 1 An excellent source for standards used in archives and discussed in this paper and much related information is Victoria Irons Walch, comp., *Standards for Archival Description: A Handbook* (Chicago, 1994), with contributions by Marion Matters.
- 2 *Rules for Archival Description* (Ottawa, 1990).
- 3 *Toward Descriptive Standards: Report and Recommendations of the Canadian Working Group on Archival Descriptive Standards* (Ottawa, December 1985).
- 4 Michael Gorman and Paul W. Winkler, eds. (prepared under the direction of the Joint Steering Committee for Revision of AACR), *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules*, 2nd ed. (1988 Revision) (Ottawa, London, Chicago, 1988).
- 5 There are five Canadian MARC formats, the full citations for which are as follows:
(Citations for the English versions of the CAN/MARC formats)

Canadian MARC Communication Format: Authorities.--3rd ed.--Ottawa: Canadian MARC Office, 1988-

Canadian MARC Communication Format: Classification Data.--Ottawa: Canadian MARC Office, 1992-

Canadian MARC Communication Format: Holdings Data.--Ottawa: Canadian MARC Office, 1990-
Canadian MARC Communication Format for Bibliographic Data.--2nd ed.--Ottawa: Canadian MARC Office, 1994-

Canadian MARC Communication Format for Minimal Level Bibliographic Data.--3rd ed.--Ottawa: Canadian MARC Office, 1995-

(Citations for the French versions of the CAN/MARC formats)

Format de communication du MARC canadien: données de classification.--Ottawa: Bureau MARC canadien, 1992-

Format de communication du MARC canadien: données sur les fonds.--Ottawa: Bureau MARC canadien, 1990-

Format de communication du MARC canadien: vedettes d'autorité.--3e éd.--Ottawa: Bureau MARC canadien, 1988-

Format de communication du MARC canadien pour les données bibliographiques.2e éd.--Ottawa: Bureau MARC canadien, 1994-

Format de communication du MARC canadien pour les données bibliographiques de niveau minimal.--3e éd.--Ottawa: Bureau MARC canadien, 1995-

This article only addresses issues associated with the format for bibliographic data and the format for authorities.

- 6 The Task Force produced a number of "position papers," two of the most influential of which were David Bearman, "Towards National Information Systems for Archives and Manuscript Repositories: First Working Paper on Scenarios for Multi-Institutional Information Exchange and their Implications for the Profession" (August 1981) and The Society of American Archivists' Task Force on National Information Systems, "Standard Data Elements for Archives and Manuscript Information Systems: A Report to the Archival Profession" (February 1982). The work of the Task Force lead directly to "A Proposed MARC Format for Archives and Manuscripts" (April 1982).
- 7 Steve Hensen, *Archives, Personal Papers and Manuscripts: A Cataloging Manual for Archival Repositories, Historical Societies, and Manuscript Libraries* (Washington, 1983).
- 8 Steve Hensen, *Archives, Personal Papers, and Manuscripts: A Cataloging Manual for Archival Repositories, Historical Societies, and Manuscript Libraries*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, 1989).
- 9 Nancy Sahli, *MARC For Archives and Manuscripts: The AMC Format* (Chicago, 1985).
- 10 *Toward Descriptive Standards*, p. 72.
- 11 International Council on Archives, *Dictionary of Archival Terminology: English and French. With Equivalents in Dutch, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish* (ICA Handbook Series, Volume 3) (München, 1984). Second edition under the same title (ICA Handbook Series, Volume 7), (München, 1988).
- 12 *Toward International Descriptive Standards for Archives: Papers Presented at the ICA Invitational Meeting of Experts on Descriptive Standards. National Archives of Canada, Ottawa, 4-7 October 1988* (München, 1993), p. 172.
- 13 International Council on Archives, *ISAD(G): General International Standard Archival Description* Adopted by the Ad Hoc Commission on Descriptive Standards, Stockholm, Sweden, 21-23 January 1993 (Final ICA approved version) (Ottawa, 1994).
- 14 Michael Cook and Margaret Procter, *A Manual of Archival Description* (Aldershot, 1986). The second edition was published in 1989.
- 15 International Council on Archives, *ISAAR(CPF): International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons and Families* Prepared by the Ad Hoc Commission on Descriptive Standards, Paris, France, 15-20 November 1995 (Ottawa, 1996).