

Transforming the Crazy Quilt: Archival Displays from a Users' Point of View¹

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RÉSUMÉ Cet article fait état des résultats d'une étude réalisée à l'aide d'un groupe témoin d'utilisateurs en vue d'obtenir leur opinion sur le contenu et le format de l'affichage des systèmes d'information archivistique. L'étude soulevait deux questions : quelle information au sujet des documents d'archives les utilisateurs souhaiteraient-ils voir affichée dans les catalogues disponibles en ligne ou sur le web et comment voudraient-ils voir cette information formatée ? Les participants ont évalué un affichage réalisé à l'aide de la norme américaine d'encodage des descriptions archivistiques (*Encoded Archival Description, EAD*), celui de quatre systèmes d'information archivistique existants et six autres formats créés spécialement à l'aide de règles bibliographiques d'affichage. Différentes conclusions sont tirées de cette étude comme, par exemple, que les utilisateurs ont de la difficulté à interpréter l'information relative à la description physique et à la date de création des documents alors que certains ont été déconcertés par l'usage du mot « fonds ». En conclusion, l'article formule des suggestions destinées à la création de formats d'affichage satisfaisants.

ABSTRACT This paper reports on the results of a focus group study to obtain users' opinions on the content and format of displays in archival information systems. The study addressed two questions: what information about archival materials would users like to see displayed in online public access catalogues or on the web and how would they like the material displayed? Participants evaluated an Encoded Archival Description display, displays taken from four existing archival information systems, and a sixth specially created display based on guidelines on bibliographic displays. The present study produced a number of findings, for example that users had problems interpreting information regarding physical description and dates of creation and that many were confused by use of the word "fonds." The paper concludes with suggestions for designing more usable displays.

The purpose of archival description is multifaceted. Description plays an important role in archival control, supporting functions such as accessioning, processing, and record scheduling. Description is also critical to providing users with access to holdings.² Frederic Miller notes that "archival description is fundamentally a process of communicating information about sets of record to their potential users."³ Description provides researchers with valuable contextual information that users need to understand and use records, often

throughout the various stages in their research. During the last decade, Canadian archivists have concentrated much effort in developing the Canadian *Rules for Archival Description (RAD)* to standardize their descriptive practices and enable users to access information as efficiently and independently as possible. *RAD* has been widely implemented by Canadian archivists, but to date, no systematic study has been undertaken to discover whether *RAD*-compliant descriptions help users locate what they need. Some archivists have contended that the rules have improved access to archival material⁴ while others have suggested that the rules require radical modification to meet the needs of particular users.⁵ However, these opinions and their underlying assumptions are based on impressionistic observations and have not been empirically tested.

There are limitations to *RAD*. *RAD* is a data content standard which controls the content of the elements of description. It is an input standard, not an output standard. *RAD* suggests the elements required in a minimum level of description and implies an order for those elements, but does not provide guidelines for the formatting or structuring of the descriptions. The order is based on the order of elements recommended by *AACR2*, and is most relevant to paper-based finding aids that do not use labels. (Labels are terms or phrases that introduce and identify an element.) In a system that does not use labels, a standard order of elements and punctuation helps users locate and identify elements: for example, the dates always come after the title and are preceded by a dash. Labels serve the same purpose of locating and identifying elements, and therefore reduce the need for a prescribed order. The *General International Standard for Archival Description (ISAD[G])*⁶ does not proscribe an order or the elements that a description should contain. This reflects a recognition that input standards such as *ISAD[G]* should not control the presence or order of elements in an output product.⁷ Research to establish the minimum number of elements and their preferred order is greatly needed. The following article reports on the findings of a study that used focus groups to obtain users' opinions of six different displays of *RAD*-compliant fonds level descriptive displays.

Literature Review: Evaluations of Archival Description

In 1989 the Society of American Archivists Working Group on Standards for Archival Description called for studies of users' opinions on descriptive practices.⁸ However, only two research studies have investigated the ability of users to understand and use archival descriptions. In 1992 Young & Wiltshire Management Consultants conducted a study of the patrons of the National Archives of Canada to evaluate the Archives' descriptive system and users' satisfaction with it. As part of this study, Young & Wiltshire collected data from 400 telephone interviews, from in-depth interviews with ten patrons, and from interviews with reference staff. The telephone interviews revealed that

there was a significant “relationship between a user’s level of satisfaction with the research tool in terms of ease of use and his/her level of understanding of the history and structure of holdings which apply to his/her research.”⁹ Users who understood the background and the history of the holdings were more satisfied than others with the reference tools. As well, the in-depth interviews revealed that all ten individuals had consulted an archivist and received assistance in using the tools. This may indicate that users have difficulty using archival descriptions without assistance. Improvements seemed necessary.

Another study by Robert P. Spindler and Richard Pearce-Moses analyzed users’ comprehension of archival descriptions.¹⁰ Fifteen participants answered seventeen multiple choice questions based upon their understanding of hard-copy reproductions of Archives and Manuscript Control (AMC) records with which they had been provided. The questions examined users’ understanding of five aspects of archival description including the relationship between main entry and the material described, the meaning of the linear extent statements, information on dates of creation, notes on the availability of findings aids, and the relationship between the subject content of the material and the subject entry. They found that users had some problems interpreting information in the descriptions. For example, only one-third of the participants were able to interpret date information correctly and locate material related to a particular time period. Results from the question that tested the users’ understanding of the linear extent statements were inconclusive.

Both of these studies had limitations. The Young & Wiltshire Management Consultants study did not interview participants while participants were visiting archives or actually using the research tools. Instead the study relied on participants’ memories of previous visits to the archives. The Spindler and Pearce-Moses study used only a small number of participants and descriptions drawn from only one automated descriptive system. Both studies had clear deficiencies. Nevertheless, while archivists have not studied their descriptive systems in a systematic manner, other research exists on interfaces between systems and users that *does* provide many findings relevant to the design of archives systems.

Literature Review: Bibliographic Displays

Even still, there has been no research on archival displays published to date. Most relevant studies have focused on library displays. Crawford, Stovel, and Bales studied bibliographic displays using records from the RLIN (Research Libraries Information Network), but they omit Archival and Manuscript (AMC) records from this source because they thought these records would distort their findings. (AMC records are on average almost fifty per cent larger than other records and differ sharply from the bibliographic records in their test bed.)¹¹

Other studies on bibliographic displays provide better examples of research that the archival community should apply to archival displays. The research in this field is concerned with issues of both the content and format of displays. For example, Shires and Olszak,¹² using previous studies, summarize the basic principles of interface design and provide examples, discussing general principles of screen design, menus, commands, inquiry screens, and system messages. Guidelines developed by Shires and Olszak are based on general principles of screen design for computer interfaces such as those developed by W.O. Galitz.¹³ Shires and Olszak advise screen designers to ensure that interfaces put the user in control.¹⁴ They emphasize that, in terms of format, good visual design means balance, regularity, symmetry, economy, and sequentiality. They further recommend the use of a ragged right margin, of white space on screens for better readability, centered text (if based on a central axis), adoption of upper case labels, and a consistent, logical order for display menus. In terms of content, they advise clarity and consistency, brevity (including only necessary information), and limited use of abbreviations and acronyms. They also recommend that users of online public access catalogues (OPACs) be involved in all phases of screen design – establishing, testing, and evaluation.

In his paper, "Current Issues on Online Catalog User Interface Design," Crawford,¹⁵ as well, advises concentrating designers' attention on real users of the system and their actual needs. In analyzing display format, he emphasizes the need to remember that known principles of design (such as clarity and consistency, and use of white space) should form starting points when creating a new interface. Crawford also discusses the use of labels in bibliographic displays, and the problems that can arise for users when elements are inappropriately labelled.

To address such issues, for her 1995 Masters thesis Juliana Chan designed a checklist for evaluating OPAC bibliographic displays.¹⁶ It consisted of four sections: label, text, instructional information, and screen layout. She applied the checklist to OPACs in twelve academic libraries. Her findings reveal a wide gap between design guidelines and the existing displays, with the weakest area being screen layout.

Another study, by Annie Luk, used focus groups "to investigate the bibliographic elements that users find more or less useful in bibliographic displays, the bibliographic information that users would like to add to displays, and the bibliographic display format" that users preferred in OPACs.¹⁷ One of the goals of the study was to look for similarities and differences in the opinions of English and Cantonese speaking users of online catalogues. The results of this study were consistent with other user studies and design guidelines for bibliographic displays. The most used bibliographic elements were title, author, and subjects while the most infrequently used elements were International Standard Book Number (ISBN) and Library of Congress Control Number (LCCN).

The participants in Luk's study strongly preferred a prototype display which was constructed according to design guidelines and which contained additional bibliographic information, such as a summary. The design feature most appreciated was the use of different typeface in labels and text. In terms of elements, the English participants considered title, author, and summary to be most important, while the Chinese participants considered title, author, and call number most critical. Luk emphasized that the results of her study could supplement previous studies on the use of OPACs by providing insight into why some persons use certain information and others do not. The information gathered through focus group studies can be used by OPAC designers to create displays that better match users' needs. Luk also makes recommendations concerning the content and the design of a standard bibliographic display for monographs. In conclusion, Luk's study shows that, indeed, focus groups can be used effectively to obtain opinions, comments, and preferences from library users regarding the OPAC systems they are utilizing.

Focus Groups

Focus group interviews are a qualitative method of data gathering, developed by social scientists in the 1930s. They later became popular and have been used for many years in marketing research. They are presently gaining new popularity in social science research. The technique is used either as a self-contained method of collecting data or in conjunction with other quantitative and qualitative methods such as individual interviews, experiments, surveys, and observations of study participants.¹⁸

The reason for the popularity of the focus group technique, according to an authority on their use, is the ability "to produce believable results at a reasonable cost."¹⁹ He also emphasizes that this methodology is particularly appropriate when the research goals are to explain how people regard an experience, idea, or event. Furthermore, he says, that where human service professionals need tools for strategic planning, needs assessment, and program evaluation in order to improve programs and services, focus groups can provide them with important information about the perceptions, feelings, and the attitudes of program clients. The procedure allows professionals to see reality from the client's perspective.²⁰

Research Questions

The research for this present study addressed four research questions:

- Do users prefer an archival display created according to design guidelines over archival displays from existing systems?
- What formatting features do users prefer?

- Do the elements in existing archival displays meet the needs of users?
- What would an "ideal display" designed by users look like?

Subjects

In order to recruit subjects, three archives and four university departments were contacted and asked to circulate information about the research project and solicit volunteers. The local genealogical society in Toronto allowed the principal researcher to visit a local chapter meeting and address the members. The principal researcher also phoned volunteers to confirm that they had archival experience and to answer questions concerning the study. Each participant received a small honorarium.

Twenty-seven participants took part in the study. All but two of the subjects had university degrees. Seven (24%) had completed their masters degree and another eight (29%) were enrolled in a PhD program. Most participants were frequent users of archives with seventeen (64%) having visited an archives more than twelve times in the last year and only 26% having used an archives less than six times during the same period. The participants used a variety of archives with seventeen reporting that they visited more than three different archives in the last two years. The purpose of their visits included school related research (41%), genealogical research (41%), writing a book (7%), work (7%) and biographical research (4%).

Methodology

There were five focus groups. Each focus group session was broken down into four segments.

1. The participants first completed a consent form, an audio recording release form, and a background questionnaire.
2. The moderator next led a structured discussion about six different displays using a set of preset questions.
3. The participants then completed an additional questionnaire which asked each to evaluate the six displays and rank thirty-two data elements in their order of importance.
4. Finally, the participants had an unstructured discussion in which they designed an "ideal display."

The two researchers were present during the focus groups: one (the principal researcher, Wendy Duff) recorded the session and the other, Penka Stoyanova, led the structured discussion. In the summer of 1997, when the focus group sessions were held, the moderator had not acquired a knowledge of archival description. A practice session was first conducted with students from

the Faculty of Information Studies, University of Toronto, to finalize the procedures and questionnaires. The data was transcribed and analyzed using NUDIST software.

The Displays

The six displays²¹ were created for the project by four different archives, a group of students, and the researchers (see **Appendix**). One display was captured from a SIRSI system available via the web (see **Appendix, Display 1**). Two archives agreed to input the information from this display into their local system and print out a copy of their displays. One archives used Gencat (**Appendix, Display 3**), and the other used Inmagic (**Appendix, Display 5**). Another archives used the information in the description to create a display consistent with a prototype that it was developing for its new system (**Appendix, Display 6**). A group of students working on an Encoded Archival Description project incorporated the information into a project display using Panorama Pro (**Appendix, Display 4**), applying a style sheet loosely based on a display from the Library of Congress. Finally, one of the displays (**Appendix, Display 2**) was created by the principal researcher. It was based on Luk's prototype display, using the features recommended in design guidelines.²²

There was some variation in the content of the six displays. For example, one archives used the data from the first display, but rewrote the scope and content, the biographical sketch, and some of the notes to comply with its institutional guidelines (see **Appendix, Display 6**). The order of elements was also controlled by the archives' system and, as a result, the order in the six displays varied. When creating her own prototype, the principal researcher in this study changed the order of elements as prescribed in *RAD*, and placed the biographical sketch at the end (see **Appendix, Display 2**). The displays were photocopied onto different coloured paper and numbered one to six in random order. Almost all navigational information was removed from the displays and the archives names were also removed. This was done to eliminate extraneous information that might have biased the participants' response and affected their evaluation of the displays. The displays, forms, and questionnaires were placed in a folder which was given to each participant when they arrived for the session.

Limitations

Notably, some of the results might have been different if the creator was unknown or was a corporate body. The display described the personal papers of a famous Canadian writer, Margaret Laurence. As well, the participants saw the display of a fonds level description which did not include any series or

file level descriptions. Moreover, the participants saw and commented on printouts of the displays rather than actual computer screens. The type of fonts, size of type, and so on, may have affected their evaluations. Furthermore, the prototype display created by the researcher was produced using word-processing software. This may have resulted in a clearer presentation than the displays captured from existing systems.

Findings

Displays

Sixteen participants (59%) preferred Display 2 produced by the researcher according to design principles and using Luk's prototype display; seven (26%) preferred Display 6, originating in an archives; and four (15%) preferred Display 4 created by the students (see **Appendix**). Participants commented that formatting features such as use of bold typefaces, lists, labels, white space, and justification improved the readability of the displays. They also noted that abbreviations, repetition, and excessive information made displays difficult to read. These remarks are consistent with the findings of previous studies on OPAC design.

Formatting

Participants wanted the elements identified by right-justified or bolded labels. Overall they wanted to be able to browse displays quickly to locate needed information. Displays with right-justified headings or labels, they felt, made information much easier to find. As one participant emphasized, "when you have a lot of work you have to do, you sometimes [just] want to look at the headings and see whether it's going to be related to ... the purpose of the search." Speed and easy navigation were both important. "I think that Display 2 is superior," he said, "because you [can] just basically look at the headings and see how much farther you have to go."

Another person (who was in the midst of a job search) highlighted the importance of having the labels right justified: Display 2, he said, "looks a lot like a résumé ... [But if] you [were] to take this [showed Display 1] to the career centre and have this critiqued by the résumé person, they would give this one an F in terms of presentation. Display 2 is very good because it's very clear, the way [labels are] indented to the right" – that is, right justified. In addition, he continued, "the font is clearer, bolder. Visually, it's a lot easier to appreciate." Participants found that the labels were even more helpful when they were highlighted. As one person noted, "if you are going to put more information [in], then [use] more of these bold headings because [they take] your eye right

to the place. It's eye-catching." Moreover, respondents felt that a lot of white space and extra lines between elements made displays faster and easier to read.

Lists were considered essential to help people locate information quickly and efficiently. During the discussion, eighteen of the twenty-seven participants commented that lists increased their ability to browse a display quickly, especially when looking at the *Scope and Content* element. One person commented that, "maybe because I have a math and science background and I'm not firstly a historian, ... I find that when things are tabulated or put in lists that they're easier to sort out quickly. For instance I would put correspondence, financial records, manuscripts on separate lines. I know that's possibly a difficulty [because] of the size of the screen, but for me it would make it quicker [to] go to whatever it was I wanted." Not only did lists make the displays quicker to read; the participants found that lists improved their understanding of fonds contents, one commenting that "I like the separate listing under the *Scope and Content*. It's very clear, then, how many sources of information there are. When they run one after the other, it isn't quite as clear."

Too much information hindered the reading of the display. Commenting on Display 5 (which features a lengthy biographical sketch in paragraph form), one person termed it "overwhelming." "I think somebody already made the comment," she continued: "when you're tired you just don't want to look at this. You want clear headings and to know exactly [what's there], to be able to zoom in on certain things right away." Similarly, commenting on the *Scope and Content* element in Display 6, another participant stated: "there's almost too much information in some places. It's very clear ... but I don't know – I think there's a lot to go through."

Labels

Participants saw labels as an important tool in presenting information, but found some terms in the labels confusing, one commenting that "it is really important to make sure that the labelling is clear, because there [are] a lot of people using archives who are not professionals and who are not academics." They preferred the terms *Scope and Content* to *Abstract*, *Finding Aid Note* to *Index Note*, *Additional Material* to *Associated Material*, and *Access Conditions* to *Access Restrictions*. For example, one person remarked "that *Scope and Content* seems like a better title to me because we're accustomed to [seeing] abstract refer to the brief quote at the beginning of a paper in a scientific journal." Some participants also preferred the term *Physical Description* to *Extent*, one terming it "more plain English." In addition, the label *Dates of Creation* was preferred over *Publication Information*, one participant describing it as "distinctly better," commenting that it "makes more sense to me." Other participants suggested that *Inclusive Dates* would be an even better label, one terming it "the clearest out of all of them so far."

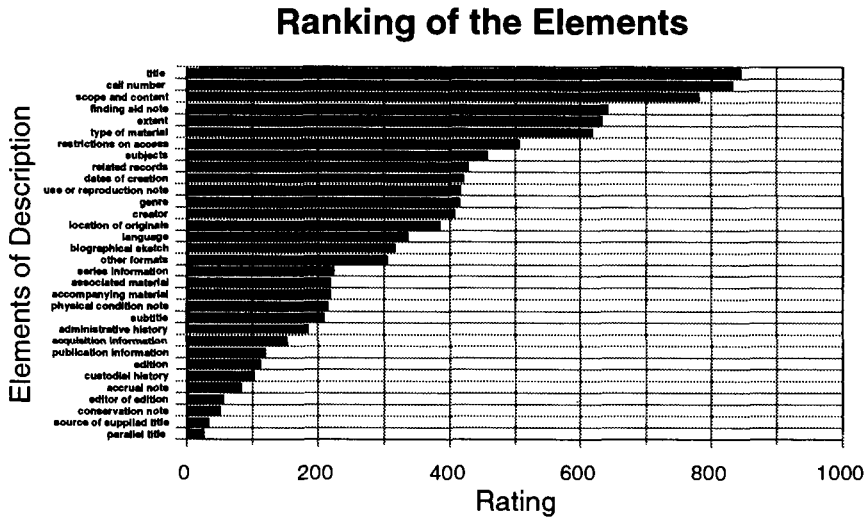
Elements

As one of their activities, the participants were asked to rank – using the second study questionnaire – the elements of a display in their order of importance in selecting archival material for research. The list of elements presented for assessment included all the elements found in *RAD*, at all levels of description. The participants completed the questionnaire following conclusion of the structured group discussions. Notably, rankings may have been affected by the discussion. For example, the *Biographical Sketch* was ranked as the sixteenth most important element, while the *Administrative History* was ranked twenty-third. Had circumstances been different, these judgments might have varied. The displays that the participants had evaluated featured descriptions of personal papers. It is quite conceivable that the *Administrative History* would have been placed higher if the prior discussion had focussed on the records of a corporate body. Furthermore, the participants ranked the fonds title as the most critical element, but ranked the name of the creator as thirteenth most important. In the displays that the participants evaluated, the *Title* included the name of the creator, Margaret Laurence. Therefore, in completing their rankings the participants may have assumed that the creator's name was always part of the *Title*.

In graphing the results, every time an element was ranked number one it was assigned thirty-two points; if it was ranked second it received thirty-one points, and so on. The results from the rankings are presented in **Figure 1**. The elements *Title*, *Call Number*, and *Scope and Content* came first, second, and third overall, followed closely by the *Finding Aid Note*, *Extent of the Material* element, and *Types of Material*. The *Title* element was ranked first by fifteen participants, and twelve participants ranked the *Call Number* element first. In the middle range of overall ranking were the elements *Restrictions on Access*, *Subjects*, *Related Groups of Records*, *Dates of Creation*, *Terms of Use and/or Reproduction*, *Form or Genre of the Material*, *Creator of the Material*, *Locations of the Originals*. Less than three participants ranked *Editor*, *Source of Supplied Title*, and *Parallel Title* as important.

The structured discussion shed light on why the participants rated the *Call Number*, *Scope and Content*, and the *Finding Aid Note* so highly. Although the participants ranked the *Title* as the most important element, no one mentioned it when the moderator asked what type of information was important. As noted before, the *Call Number* element was rated highly – the second most important element. Assume, as one participant said, that someone is using an “Archives of Ontario description on the Internet.” Assume also, they said, that if that person wanted to know the contents of the collection, the description was fine, but the display was still lacking because it did not provide the call numbers.²³ Supplying the numbers would be much better: “if they were going to come here to visit, or if [they wished] to hire someone from a distance to do

Figure One



the work for them” it would “[cut] down on everybody’s time” if they could be given “those access numbers right away” through the computerized display. Participants wanted the *Call Number* right at the display’s beginning; as one said, “You’re sitting down, jotting down notes, you need to have that number.”

More detailed levels of information on how to *retrieve* the information were also very important. Focus group participants found displays lacking such information confusing. As one participant exclaimed, “it does not tell you how to get it! You know—what do I write on a call slip to get it?”

The participants considered the *Scope and Content* element to be very important, one saying that, “actually, I would prefer the *Abstract* to come up right on the first screen. You have to know what the material is all about.” The participants gained a great deal of information from the *Scope and Content* element. (This element contained data that also appeared in other parts of the display such as the *Dates of Creation* element.) One participant noted that “the *Scope and Content* tells us what’s in your repository” and that inclusion of records dates was very helpful in clarifying records contents: “I think that’s the most important thing to me about getting into that material.” If, as the participant, said, he needed a letter written in 1955, but the date ranges indicated that there was no correspondence from 1955, then he would know immediately that there was no such material in the papers. As simple as this seems, this was an important concern.

Commenting on the descriptive *Scope and Content* provided in **Display 6** (see **Appendix**), some participants said they specifically liked the use of

narrative technique for describing what types of material were included in the fonds. They found this presentation of data particularly useful in determining what information the fonds might include. "In defence of this literary descriptive entry," one participant said, "I kind of like it because it [can] give you information that only words or text can give you: in other words, the photos of so and so and family. ... That's useful information because the [other displays] just say 'photos,' or just say 'other material.' Now we know that we have photos of her and her family. That could be very useful for someone doing research." Pointing to **Display 6**, another participant said that there is "something I love about [it]. It says 'graphic materials include photos of Margaret Laurence and her family, drawings used in the production of her books, audio ... 'I mean it tells you about it.'" In addition, he commented, the description notes that the fonds had been "acquired from her daughter," which suggested that there "could be things on a lot more of a personal note" within the papers. Nevertheless, other participants did not like the narrative format used in the *Scope and Content* of **Display 6**, one complaining that "it's too descriptive. I don't want to see a description. I'd rather see a list of what's available. I mean some description is good, but ... "

Another participant described the types of information that the element should contain: "I think I'd start with some kind of concise description of what is in the collection, the different types of materials that are in there, and then the call numbers after that." In addition, for some the *Scope and Content* was more important than the *Biographical Sketch*, one complaining that the length of the biographical note – maybe "twice three times" the length of the *Scope and Content* element – "seems to be kind of out of proportion," as the *Scope and Content* information was "always" more critical.

Moreover, literary scholars in the groups had slightly different interests than the historians or genealogists, and therefore wanted different, more complete types of information highlighted under *Scope and Content*. One commented that, "as a student of literature I'd be interested in slightly more information; for example, is there draft material for *The Diviners*? ... It's amazing how detailed the biographical sketch is, but in order to know if there is draft material or manuscript material for, say, the 'five novels' more information, he said, was needed: "For example, Display 4 says 'manuscripts' but it does not have a listing to say 'manuscripts for [these] following texts.'" "It's funny," he said, "how brief the *Scope and Content* is as opposed to the biography."

Participants rated a note that provided information on the availability of finding aids very highly. However, they wanted a lot more detail about what type of finding aids existed. One commented that, "okay," there were "file and item lists available for correspondence" and "item lists available for graphical material," but still wanted "as much as possible" in the way of information, noting that, "if I have to travel to wherever this is, the amount of time that I'll have to spend in that locality in order to access and use these records" was

“really important.” “So there are research aids available,” he continued, “but are these 500 page research aids or are these legal size lists that were duplicated fifty years ago?” Moreover, was the descriptive material “donated?” because that could mean that it was “really old and totally inadequate.”

Some participants also wanted to know where the finding aid was located and how they could get it. Some found the *Finding Aid Note* confusing, one pointing out that on one display, the wording indicated that a finding aid was available, but that it also said that, “to order files, use finding aid if available, if not use location number.” “Where is the finding aid?” she asked. Still another participant suggested that on-line, multi-level description could make the finding aid note unnecessary, so that:

instead of just urging you to go look at the finding aid, [the display could provide] another level of detailed information. So, after you look at the abstract and see what is in the collection, ... then you go, like in Display 1, to the subject break down, [where] you could perhaps open each one of those and have a lovely display of lists of correspondence ... 1952-1956 perhaps is one entry, maybe there is something from the sixties. I mean, that would entail a lot more complicated software, but it could almost eliminate the need for a finding aid ultimately, if it could all be computerized.

As noted earlier, the *Extent of the Material* element was rated as the fifth most important element. The participants discussed why. One participant recalled “going to New York Public Library and they said [my material] was all out ... in storage, and it was 125 linear shelf space. All of a sudden I realized how large this particular collection was, and to bring it all in, was going to be a big job.”

Participants who used special media found the *Physical Description* element particularly critical, such as one who remarked, “Well, I find ... that the extent or the physical description of the archives is most important to me, in particular, if there are any maps, drawings, things like that, [to indicate what is available]. So that’s the advantage, I think, ... because right away you know what is there.” The same participant preferred point form data over narrative, noting that “instead of a sentence form, it has a list, so you can see right away if it contains something that is of interest to you.” Extent statements also helped the participants keep track of their progress in examining collections. As one said, “if it says twelve metres, and in brackets forty boxes or whatever it is, then I have a very clear idea.”

The participants did not like the displays that followed the *RAD* option of indicating the extent of one item alone in the *Physical Description* area and relegating the remaining statements to a note. Some felt there was not enough detail, while others felt that information about extent should be presented in one place in a more complete and consolidated form. Information was “broken up” and too sparse, one person said regarding **Display 5**. “They’ve put

Extent at the top and *Detailed Physical Description* at the bottom of screen two. Even the physical description, ... '260 photographs and other graphic materials,' ... isn't very detailed. I would think, if you are going to be 'detailed' let's get detail!"

Moreover, to some degree participants had trouble interpreting the linear extent statements. One of the discussions proceeded as follows, starting with the moderator:

"Just one quick question. Does anybody understand what twelve metres of textual records means?"

"Means two weeks in the archives!"

"It's for the archivists themselves."

"I think it is. But I think in general terms you would know what it is. It's ... got to be books; it's got to be file boxes with magazines in it; [or] it's got to be file boxes with documents in [them]."

"Oh, so they are actually the boxes taking up the space of twelve metres."

"Yes, the space [they occupy], when you go upstairs in the archives."

"Okay, I get it."

"What else do you think is unimportant?"

"I feel that the number, the metres of the records is, for one thing. I can't really picture it as twelve metres. Is that thirty-six feet high in a pile? Or are the pages measured, like this is eleven inches times whatever?"

The use of abbreviations, such as "12m," in the *Physical Description Area* caused confusion, the abbreviation's meaning being unclear to some. Others did not know what the twelve metres described in terms of the dimensions or volume. One seconded a previous comment, saying, "Yes, I had the same question, and I was laughing to myself and thinking, is this twelve miles? But no, it was metres. Maybe archivists like to tell people that there's twelve metres, but does it mean twelve metres high or twelve metres long?" Many participants seemed to have problems with metric measurement in general, one person responding to a previous comment, remarking, "Yeah, I guess by law they have to use these metres or centimetres but I agree with you that it's just confusing. I'm just ignoring them because [they do not] mean anything to me."

The wording of some notes was criticized. Commenting on the notes in **Display 3**, one participant remarked: "On screen two, it says access is unrestricted, sign this form for access. Screen three, access points, tells us that [again] ... and then it says, 'Please note you can't request' [records at this level of arrangement]; it's almost like a contradiction and you're sitting there wondering, well I've read through this whole thing, I think I can get this material, now they say I can't. What am I supposed to do? Is there a help button on this machine?" Another stated he did not like negative statements, complaining

that "I hate [being told] what I can't do. I want to know what I *can* do." He would be happier, he thought, if the restriction were reworded "in a more positive way," as in "'you are able to,' or 'you can request material at such and such.'"

Other features won a more favourable response. Not surprisingly, users felt that the *Dates of Creation* element helped them determine the relevance of the material to their information need. One participant stated that he thought dates were important because he wanted to know quickly if the material covered "a particular period." Treatment of the information was another issue, however. As noted earlier, some felt that the dates should be covered in the *Scope and Content* statement for the sake of detail and clarity. As one participant said, "If you are looking for, say, illustrations of a particular event, say the 1837 Rebellion, and if it's listed here [under *Scope and Content* indicating] that they start in 1837 and they go all the way up to 1920, then you know you've got pictures from the 1920s that are about the 1837 Rebellion." Although many thought that dates were important, some were not sure precisely what the *Dates of Creation* element referred to: "*Dates of Creation*. Whose creation? Is this when Margaret Laurence was writing, or is this when the collection was collected."

In fact a number of the participants thought that the *Dates of Creation* related to the dates when the papers were assembled or when material was added to the fonds, not when the constituent records were created. One participant, believing that the dates referred to the years over which the fonds was created and then expanded, actually thought that the information would enable him to assess previous meddling with records. A user of military and diplomatic archives, he had once used a collection through which persons, he believed, had been through "and cleared out information they didn't like." He thought that by "establishing when the collection has been created [and] what year it's been added to, [he could] rule out who had tampered with it or who had cleaned it out ... It would help to establish answers to important questions."

Like the *Dates of Creation*, other information (in particular, the *Biographical Sketch*) was also important for telling users whether records were relevant to their research. One participant remarked that the *Biographical Sketch* "takes up a lot of space and splits the screens up, but it helps establish the provenance of the source. Margaret Laurence is not a particularly big issue because she's so famous, but with less famous authors and sources, I've spent a lot of time trying to figure out who the heck they were and it would be great if there was an identity established in all the finding guides right away." Short succinct biographies were preferred over long biographies. Another participant remarked that, "if you use the Union Lists of Manuscripts typically they force you down to three or four lines of something like 'Margaret Laurence, these days, writer, born in Winnipeg, lived in Somalia, Chancellor of Trent University ... ,' down to a core number of things"; this was "key." Despite

welcoming brevity, the same participant still saw biographical information as important because, if the records creator “happens to be Margaret Smith we need that information about Margaret Smith, the fact why she is significant, the fact that these records are here. In some cases they are significant for reasons other than the name or the title of the item.” The biographical data provided that information.

Still others did not want any *Biographical Sketch*. “Why is there so much of an emphasis on the biography and all?” one person asked. “It’s important to know her dates and everything, but ... I would assume that if you’re going to look this up, you probably know a lot about that anyway, and maybe that’s just me – and maybe people use it for a different use – but if you’re going into the correspondence you’re going to know who she is [already].” The resulting reactions were “going to be yeah, yeah, yeah I know what all this is, and it seems to take up a lot of room.” The participant suggested dropping the sketch unless it was placed elsewhere and accessed by clicking on a hypertext link. In addition, many participants wanted the *Bibliographical Sketch* placed last in the display, or as one remarked, “I would say put that at the end and then move all this other stuff up [so] that anybody who wants to [can] go right in and get the stuff they [need].” “Then if they are interested,” he said, “they can screen down to the biography.”

Once again, terminology raised questions. Participants found the *Source of Supplied Title* confusing, one musing over an entry reading, “*Source of Supplied Title*: title based on contents of the fonds.” “Well I would assume that to be true,” she said; “It would not make sense to [say] otherwise.” She was unsure as to why the material was pertinent: “It just takes up space.” In addition, she and others had “no idea” what the word “accessions” meant, another commenting that “I haven’t heard that word before.” Like the others, this second participant was puzzled by the “*Source of Supplied Title*” element.

One participant found the *Accession Note* particularly irritating, especially when accessions had not yet been processed and were still unavailable after a number of years, commenting that “the thirty-ninth accession in 1989 and the forty-sixth accession in 1989 mean something to people who are doing intellectual control of the acquisition of the material.” But “personally,” he said, “I find these things almost extraordinarily annoying when I get to the National Archives” and learn that the accessions, he said, are being treated as “separate collections because [the Archives has not] touched them [even though] the stuff ... arrived with the transport in 1989.”

The use of the word *fonds* in the *Title* perplexed many participants. In each group, participants were hesitant to admit they did not know the meaning of the word until someone else finally brought it up. Only then would the rest of the group say that they, too, were puzzled over the word’s meaning. Inevitably, this emerged about fifteen to twenty minutes after each session started. One participant expressed his confusion:

“Fonds” as in? I don’t even know what a fonds is. Series, subseries, and then fonds? Margaret Laurence fonds and inclusive dates? – well I don’t think we’re even sure of what that means still. [When you’re] just sort of starting, it’s not user friendly at all.

Another participant, commenting on preceding displays, noted that “the previous ones use the term *fonds* too. I always sort of thought that meant collection, but why do people use it, I wonder? I guess it’s one of those archival terms again.” “It’s interesting,” another person said finally, “I guess we all begged away from asking, ‘what’s fonds?’”

In fact, the presence of the word fonds presented a significant barrier to understanding the rest of the description. “Oh, it’s Margaret Laurence!” one person exclaimed, pointing to the title; “It’s our Margaret Laurence! It was the ‘fonds’ that was confusing me. ... I just didn’t know what ‘fonds’ ... or ‘Margaret Laurence fonds’ [meant]. I was just keeping quiet about that ... [I]t took me away from the fact that we were talking about Margaret Laurence, I was so worried [about] the ‘fonds,’ ... which makes me even more interested in what the moving image records [are], because we don’t get to see a lot of her.” Some thought that “fonds” was a surname, one pointing out that “at the very top it says ‘FONDS: MARGARET LAURENCE FONDS.’” “Actually,” another said, “I had a big argument at the Archives of Ontario the other day about how come everybody has the same last name.” When the meaning of the word was explained every participant agreed that it was an important concept. However, the explanation was needed, or as one person asked, “Any idea what it means? ... I know it is a very good archival word, but people who [use the archives] don’t know what it is. There should be a notice somewhere up: “When you use this material, ‘fonds’ means ... ””

Some participants suggested that a glossary would be extremely helpful in solving such problems or, as one participant said, “Interpretation of terminology, I think – it’s very important because I am not sure that a lot of institutions use the same terminology and use the same words. I found it in law; I found it in some reports of social workers ... [T]he same word has different interpretations, and this should be noted.”

In conclusion, the content and format of displays presented barriers to accessing material. One person summed up the frustration created by having to use a display containing unexplained and obscure terminology in the following manner:

If [the goal of archival description is] making material accessible to people, then don’t build these barriers, between the ordinary people and the material. The other image I’ve used is ... I have needle work, and it looks very patterned on one side; you turn it over, it’s a crazy quilt. So it makes sense to the archivist in terms of what they have to do in order to turn the material [over] to the people? But don’t turn [its] crazy quilt side out because, on your side it looks neatly printed – but to us all that’s spread on the back

doesn't make any sense at all. So you have to turn it around and write it in language that we can understand.

Ideal Display

During the last part of the session the participants created their own ideal display. As one general observation, the participants wanted the *Call Number*, *Title*, and *Scope and Content* at the beginning of the record and the *Biographical Sketch* near the end. They also wanted a *Scope and Content* statement which contained a brief overview followed by a list of the series. One group wanted the list to contain the series titles, series extent, dates, and call numbers, if appropriate. They also wanted to be able to move from a brief description to a more complete description. This group wanted each screen to display a header with the call number and title of the fonds. Their ideal display is presented in **Figure 2**. They also suggested that, given further revision, their ideal display would contain labels that were right-justified and information that was left-justified as in **Display 2**. (See **Appendix**).

A second group had similar elements but thought the display should be organized into four sections. The first section would answer the question: what is it about? It would contain the *Call Number*, *Title*, *Creator*, *Physical Description*, *Dates of Creation*, and *Scope and Content*. The second section would answer the question: who is it about? This would contain the *Biographical Sketch*. The third section would answer the question: how do I access the material? It would contain the *Terms of Use*, *Access Restrictions*, *Finding Aids Note*, and *Immediate Source of Acquisition*. The final section would answer the question: where do I go from here? It would contain the *Subject Headings*, *Other Related Files in This Institution*, and finally *Other Related Files in Other Institutions*.

A third group also wanted right justified labels, and recommended that the information be organized within the displays following the order presented in **Figure 3**.

Discussion

Formatting

The results from this study indicate that users preferred an archival display created according to design guidelines over archival displays produced from existing systems. The majority of the participants preferred the display based on the Luk prototype – consistent with guidelines for OPAC design. Participants commented that those features that made displays easier to read were right-justified labels, lists, use of white space, and bolding. **Display 2** was the longest of all the displays because it included these features, but the extra

Figure Two The Ideal Display, Group 1, Screens 1 and 2

Call #	Title:
Creator:	Date/Period of Creation:
Language:	
Scope and Content: [Paragraph Style - Brief]	
List of series: Series Extent Date Number [Hyperlinked to more detailed screens]	

Call#	Title:
Access Conditions:	
Usage:	
Accessibility: [Condition of the material] [Interlibrary Loan?] [Reproduction?]	
Related Material:	
[In this Archives] [Elsewhere, with hyperlink to other archives]	
How and when acquired:	
Biographical sketch:	

length of the record did not seem to concern any of the participants. The participants noted that the labels and lists enabled them to skim the five screens quickly and locate relevant information.

The terminology used in the labels caused some confusion: terminology used in library OPACS may not be completely suitable for archival displays. Display 1 came from a library system; the labels describing bibliographic elements such as publication information and abstracts confused some of the

Figure Three The Ideal Display, Group 3

Call #	
Title:	
Scope and Content:	[brief descriptive abstract of the content, as in Display 6, followed by list format, as in Display 4, including physical description]
Finding aids:	
Access restrictions:	
Related material:	[Material in this archives]
Additional material:	[Material in other places : links to online resources and published materials on the topic]
Use and reproduction:	
Custodial history:	
Biographical sketch:	
Subjects:	
Name index:	

participants. More research is needed to find the best terminology for labels. Library research may provide some guidance but there are many notes needed in archival descriptions that are not relevant to library material and are not likely to be considered in library research. The archival community will have to undertake this research to identify effective labels for displays.

The participants could not always interpret abbreviations, especially abbreviations of metric measures. Previous design research has confirmed that people often have problems understanding abbreviations. *RAD* specifies the use and abbreviation of SI (that is, International System of Units or metric) symbols, but this requirement appears to cause problems for archival users.

Content

The elements prescribed by *RAD* and present in existing displays seem to meet some of the needs of users, although some elements require revision and others were not rated highly. Furthermore, some participants recommended an order of elements that was inconsistent with the order suggested by *RAD*. For example, the order of the elements recommended by the second group of participants closely resembles the order prescribed by the *General International Standard Archival Description (ISAD[G])*.²⁴ The only major difference is that according to *ISAD(G)*, the *Scope and Content* element should be placed in the third area of description, and according to our users, it should be at the end of the first section (the “what is it about?” section, as they termed it). Otherwise, there is an interesting level of agreement between what our users wanted and

how ISAD(G) organizes the description. For example, the users wanted the *Biographical Sketch* in the second area of description, followed by conditions of access and use, and then by related materials. This closely mirrors the order and grouping of elements prescribed by *ISAD(G)*.

However, most of the displays used in this research followed the order suggested by *RAD*. This was based upon that recommended by *AACR2*, which is consistent with the elements traditionally contained in catalogue cards. Nevertheless, as previously noted, *RAD* is in fact a data *content* standard rather than a system for structuring data and is therefore more concerned with the information within elements than their format or order. These are secondary. The results of this study suggest that the order of elements recommended within *RAD* may not be preferred by archival users.

The sequencing of elements is very important. Some notes, such as conditions on access, are critical and should be displayed near the beginning of the record. Moreover, study participants did not favour the option of giving partial information at the beginning of the record and more detailed information in the notes following. They wanted related information grouped together, stating, for example, that information regarding physical description should not be located in two places. Furthermore, if an archives decides that displays should indicate records' origins, that information, they said, should be linked to the fonds title. The results, however, suggest that users did not understand the purpose of the *Source of Supplied Title* note and did not think that it was very important. Only one person ranked it as being important, placing the fonds *Title* at 1a and the *Source of Supplied Title* at 1b. *RAD* requires this note whenever a title is supplied. Archives may wish to add this note to their databases to distinguish formal titles from supplied titles, but omit the note from the displays that users see.

Most participants wanted some sort of biographical sketch to guide their research but did not want the displays cluttered up with long biographies of the creator. Displays which consist of one or two sentences describing the life of the creator and contain electronic links to longer biographies located elsewhere in an authority file may fulfill the needs of many users.

Dates proved very confusing to many users. This is consistent with the Splinder Pearce-Moses study's finding that only one third of the users were able to interpret date information correctly. In the present study, some participants thought that the dates related to the dates of the creators' birth and death, others thought it indicated the dates during which the material was collected, while another group thought they meant the dates during which the material was created. The terminology used in the label did not solve the problem. This problem may have arisen because different archives record different types of dates in their displays, confusing users as they travel from one institution to another. Dates are extremely important to historical research: more research is needed to ensure that archival displays communicate clear, readily understood

information about dates. Locating this information in the *Scope and Content* element instead of a separate *Date of Creation* element might help alleviate some of the difficulties.

The participants rated the *Scope and Content* element as the third most important element in the display. This element was important in providing an overview of the fonds and more specific information about its contents. In regards to format, the data drawn from focus group discussion and development of ideal displays suggests that users prefer a short narrative overview accompanied by a list of series. This list should include series titles, series extent, dates, and any codes or call numbers required for retrieval. Users also wanted the lists linked to more detailed information about each series in a type of multi-level display.

The participants had problems interpreting the linear extent statement. This finding is consistent with the Splinter Peace-Moses study. The use of metric measurement proved particularly problematic. Supplementing the primary indication of linear extent with a statement providing information on numbers of boxes or containers might assist users in understanding the extent of the material. Moreover, some participants rated the physical description as unimportant while others stated it was extremely important. More research is needed to discover how best to record the extent of an archival fonds.

Finally, the use of the word *fonds* in the collection title confused many participants. Study findings suggested that the word hindered the participants' understanding of the rest of the title. If users think that fonds is the last name of the fonds' creator, the inclusion of the word in the title is very problematic. The concept of "fonds" is very important, and all participants, once they understood, agreed that the difference between a collection and a fonds is significant. Unfortunately, existing displays neither explain the difference between these concepts nor provide definitions of pertinent archival terminology. The Canadian Council of Archives should develop a poster that describes the concept of the fonds. Archives could then display the poster in their institutions to help educate their users. Moreover, a glossary that explains terms such as fonds or accessions should be included in archival displays to ensure that users understand their meaning.

Conclusions

The results from this study confirmed the sense that archival users prefer a display created according to design guidelines over displays from existing systems. The findings on preferred formatting features are consistent with design guidelines and other user studies centering on bibliographic displays. Furthermore, the results show that archival users know clearly what they most want from archival displays in terms of content and format. Some of the ideal displays they created could be used for future prototypes.

In terms of display contents, the results of this study showed that the elements in existing archival displays met *most* of the needs of users. However, users also suggested the inclusion of glossaries, online help functions, electronic finding aids, and indexes, which are currently missing in descriptive systems. This study also identified problems with the overall use of archival terminology in displays (e.g., dates and labels).

The findings of this study provide insights into the application and value of existing displays. It also suggests that archivists should incorporate the conclusions from OPAC research into the design of their systems. However, there are still areas where archivists will have to conduct their own studies because the needs of archival users are not the same as those of library users, although in some respects similar. Research on multi-level description is needed to learn how the hierarchical nature of archival material should be displayed. Archivists need to study their users to discover what users understand about archival displays and systems. Archivists need a better understanding of their users' needs so that they can ensure that archival displays do not remain mere "crazy quilts" of information. With appropriate research archivists will be able to turn archival displays around. They will be able to create displays that are written in a language that patrons can understand and with which they feel comfortable. These displays will present the "neatly printed" side to archival users.

Notes

- 1 The authors would like to thank Joan Cherry, Annie Lek, and Rick Kodak for their assistance with, and advice concerning the design of the research study. They would like to also thank Lisa Weber, Hugo Stab, and the reviewers for their comments on the paper.
- 2 Canadian Working Group on Archival Descriptive Standards, *Toward Descriptive Standards: Report and Recommendations of the Canadian Working Group on Archival Descriptive Standards* (Ottawa, 1985), p. 9.
- 3 Frederic M. Miller, *Arranging and Describing Archives and Manuscripts* (Chicago, 1990), p. 79.
- 4 Caiman states that "RAD descriptions themselves are remarkably self-explanatory and need very little interpretation for users." Susan M. Caiman, "RAD and the Researcher," *Archivaria* 37 (Spring 1994), p. 109.
- 5 Lemieux suggests that many of RAD elements are "of little use to the genealogical researcher" and in creating a thematic guide for genealogy she performed "RADical surgery" to RAD to "meet the perceived needs of our audience." Victoria Lemieux, "RADical Surgery: A Case Study in Using RAD to Produce a Thematic Guide," *Archivaria* 39 (Spring 1995), pp. 51-69.
- 6 *General International Standard Archival Description* (Ottawa, 1994).
- 7 For a discussion of the role of input standards and output guidelines see Wendy M. Duff and Kent M. Haworth, "Advancing Archival Description: A Model for Rationalising North American Descriptive Standards," *Archives and Manuscripts* 25 (November 1997), pp. 194-217.
- 8 "Recommendations of the Working Group on Standards for Archival Description," *American Archivist* 52 (Fall 1989), p. 473.
- 9 Young and Wiltshire Management Consultants, *Evaluation of the Control, Sub-Activity at the National Archives of Canada: Final Report* (1992), p. 12.

- 10 Robert P. Spindler and Richard Peace-Moses, "Does AMC Mean 'Archives Made Confusing'? Patron Understanding of USMARC AMC Catalog Records," *American Archivist* 56 (Spring 1993), pp. 330-41.
- 11 W. Crawford, L. Stovel, & K. Bales, *Bibliographic Displays in the Online Catalog* (White Plains, 1986).
- 12 Nancy Lee Shires and Lydia P. Olszak, "What Our Screens Should Look Like: An Introduction to Effective OPAC Screens," *RQ* 31 (1992), pp. 351-69.
- 13 W.O. Galitz, *Handbook of Screen Format Design* 3rd ed. (Wellesley, 1989).
- 14 Shires & Olszak, "What Our Screens Should Look Like," p. 359.
- 15 Walt Crawford, "Starting Over: Current Issues in Online Catalog User Interface Design," *Information Technology and Libraries* 11 (March 1992), pp. 63-76.
- 16 Juliana Chan, "An Evaluation of Displays of Bibliographic Records in OPACs in Canadian Academic and Public Libraries," (Master's Thesis, University of Toronto, 1995).
- 17 Annie Lek, *Evaluating Bibliographic Displays from the Users' point of view: A focus group study* (Master of Information Science Research Project Report, University of Toronto, Toronto, January 1996), available at <http://www.fis.utoronto.ca/research/displays/annie2.htm>.
- 18 David L. Morgan, *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research* (Quality Research Methods Series) (Newbury Parke, c1988), p. 24.
- 19 Richard A. Krueger, *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research* (Newbury Park, c1988), p. 20.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 21.
- 21 The archives and individuals who created the displays used in this study had different systems, but the archives, not the systems determined the format of the displays. Gencat, Inmagic, Sirisi, and Panorama Pro have the functionality to present any one of the displays. This study evaluated displays specified by archivists and not the systems' capabilities.
- 22 Juliana Chan, *An Evaluation of Displays of Bibliographic Records*.
- 23 In fact, Archives of Ontario internet screens include fonds and record group codes, as well as guides to the availability and location of finding aids.
- 24 *General International Standard Archival Description* (Ottawa, 1994).

Appendix

Display One

Screen 1

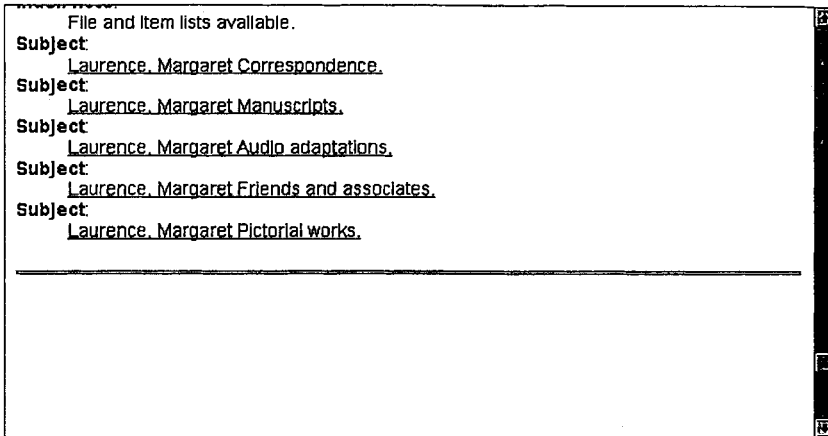
<p>F0341 Margaret Laurence fonds</p> <p>Title: <u>Margaret Laurence fonds</u></p> <p>Publication info: 1953-1987</p> <p>Physical description: 12 m of textual records. - 18 audio cassettes. - ca. 100 photographs : b&w and col. ; 28.5 x 20 cm or smaller</p> <p>Biographical note: Margaret Laurence (1926-1987), writer, was born in Neepawa, Manitoba and educated at United College in Winnipeg, Manitoba (BA 1947). Following her marriage to John Laurence (1947), she lived in Somaliland and the Gold Coast (now Somalia and Ghana), in the 1950s. Laurence returned to Canada in 1957. She moved to England in 1962 and returned to Canada in 1969. In 1974 she settled in Lakefield, Ontario. Laurence served as a writer-in-residence at the University of Toronto in 1969 and was named chancellor of Trent University (Peterborough, Ontario) in 1981. Laurence was a founding member of the Writers Union of Canada, but left the organization in a dispute over its acceptance of money from the Canadian government. Active in peace organizations and intensely interested in women's concerns, Laurence's views and works did cause controversy. Her</p>

Screen 2

<p>interested in women's concerns, Laurence's views and works did cause controversy. Her books drew criticism from certain elements in Laurence's adopted community. This group tried to have books removed from the school curriculum because of their alleged pornographic content. Margaret Laurence was the author of five novels, including the Manawaka quartet ('The stone angel,' 'A Jest of God,' 'The fire dwellers,' 'The diviners,'), short stories, essays, travel memoirs and children's books. She was named a Companion of the Order of Canada (1971) and was awarded the Molson Prize in 1975.</p> <p>Abstract: The fonds consists of the following series: S1006. Correspondence, 1962-1987; S1007. Financial records, 1961-1986; S1008. Manuscripts, 1953-1986; S1009. Printed materials, 1963-1987; S1010. Personal files, 1965-1987; S1011. Graphic materials, [196-?]-1987; S1012. Sound recordings, 1973-1987; S1013. Moving Image records, 1978-1987.</p> <p>Access restriction: Access is unrestricted.</p> <p>Terms of use/reprod: Effective 1 January 1995, researchers wishing access to the Margaret Laurence fonds must sign the Access and Use Agreement form before access is granted.</p> <p>Associated materials: There are Margaret Laurence manuscripts at McMaster University Library.</p> <p>Index note: File and item lists available.</p>

Display One continued

Screen 3



Display Two

	Screen 1 of 5
CALL NUMBER:	341-1
TITLE:	Margaret Laurence fonds. - 1953-1987
EXTENT:	12 m of textual records. 260 photographs and other graphic materials (posters, drawings, etc.). 35 sound recordings. 6 moving image recordings
ACCESS RESTRICTIONS:	Access is unrestricted
TERMS OF USE AND REPRODUCTION:	Effective 1 January 1995, researchers wishing to access to the Margaret Laurence fonds must sign the Access and Use Agreement form before access is granted.

	Screen 2 of 5
SCOPE AND CONTENTS:	The fonds consists of the following series: S1006 Correspondence, 1962-1987; S1007 Financial records, 1961-1986; S1008 Manuscripts, 1953-1986; S1009 Printed materials, 1963-1987; S1010 Personal files, 1965-1987; S1011 Graphic materials, [196-?]-1987; S1012 Sound recordings, 1973-1987; S1013 Moving image records, 1978-1987.
FINDING AIDS:	File and item lists available.
RELATED RECORDS	See Fonds 401, Enid Rutland fonds; F432, Clara Thomas fonds, and F447, Adele Wiseman fonds.
ASSOCIATED RECORDS	There are Margaret Laurence manuscripts at McMaster University Library.

	Screen 3 of 5
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH:	Margaret Laurence (1926-1987), writer, was born in Neepawa, Manitoba and educated at United College in Winnipeg, Manitoba (BA 1947). Following her marriage to John Laurence (1947), she lived in Somaliland and the Gold Coast (now Somalia and Ghana), in the 1950s. Laurence returned to Canada in 1957. She moved to England in 1962 and returned to Canada in 1969. In 1974 she settled in Lakefield, Ontario. Laurence served as a writer-in-residence at the University of Toronto in 1969 and was named chancellor of Trent University (Peterborough, Ontario) in 1981. Laurence was a founding member of the Writers Union of Canada, but left the organization in a dispute over its acceptance of money from the Canadian government.

Display Two continued

Screen 4 of 5

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH: Active in peace organizations and intensely interested in women's concerns, Laurence views and works did cause controversy. Her books drew criticism from certain elements in Laurence's adopted community. This group tried to have books removed from the school curriculum because of their alleged pornographic content. Margaret Laurence was the author of five novels, including the Manawaka quartet ('The stone angel,' 'A jest of God,' 'The fire dwellers,' 'The diviners,'), short stories, essays, travel memoirs and children's books. She was named a Companion of the Order of Canada (1971) and was awarded the Molson Prize in 1975.

CONTINUED

Screen 5 of 5

SUBJECTS: Laurence, Margaret, 1926-1987 -- Correspondence
Laurence, Margaret, 1926-1987 --Manuscripts
Laurence, Margaret, 1926-1987 --Audio Adaptations
Laurence, Margaret, 1926-1987 --Friends and Associates
Laurence, Margaret, 1926-1987 --Pictorial Works

Display Three

Screen 1

[]-----+
 FONDS 341
 MARGARET LAURENCE FONDS. - 1953-1987. - 12 m of textual records. 260
 + photographs and other graphic materials (posters, drawings, etc.). 35 +
 + sound recordings. 6 moving image recordings.

Margaret Laurence (1926-1987), writer, was born in Neepawa, Manitoba and educated at United College in Winnipeg, Manitoba (BA 1947). Following her marriage to John Laurence (1947), she lived in Somaliland and the Gold Coast (now Somalia and Ghana), in the 1950s. Laurence returned to Canada in 1957. She moved to England in 1962 and returned to Canada in 1969. In 1974 she settled in Lakefield, Ontario. Laurence served as a
 + writer-in-residence at the University of Toronto in 1969 and was named
 + chancellor of Trent University (Peterborough, Ontario) in 1981. Laurence was a founding member of the Writers Union of Canada, but left the organization in a dispute over its acceptance of money from the Canadian government. Active in peace organizations and intensely interested in women's concerns, Laurence views and works did cause controversy. Her books drew criticism from certain elements in Laurence's adopted community. This group tried to have books removed from the school

Screen 2

[]-----+
 curriculum because of their alleged pornographic content. Margaret Laurence was the author of five novels, including the Manawaka quartet ('The stone angel,' 'A jest of God,' 'The fire dwellers,' 'The diviners,'), short stories, essays, travel memoirs and children's books. She was named a Companion of the Order of Canada (1971) and was awarded the Molson Prize in 1975.

The fonds consists of the following series: S1006 Correspondence, 1962-1987; S1007 Financial records, 1961-1986; S1008 Manuscripts, 1953-1986; S1009 Printed materials, 1963-1987; S1010 Personal files, 1965-1987; S1011 Graphic materials, [196-?]1987; S1012 Sound recordings, 1973-1987; S1013 Moving image records, 1978-1987.

+ Title based on contents of the fonds.
 + Access is unrestricted.
 Effective 1 January 1995, researchers wishing to access to the Margaret Laurence fonds must sign the Access and Use Agreement form before access is granted.
 File and item lists available.
 There are Margaret Laurence manuscripts at McMaster University Library.

Display Three continued

Screen 3

[[]-----+
1965-1987; S1011 Graphic materials, [196-?]1987; S1012 Sound recordings, 1973-1987; S1013 Moving image records, 1978-1987.
+-----+
Title based on contents of the fonds.
Access is unrestricted.
Effective 1 January 1995, researchers wishing to access to the Margaret Laurence fonds must sign the Access and Use Agreement form before access is granted.
File and item lists available.
There are Margaret Laurence manuscripts at McMaster University Library.
See Fond 401, Enid Rutland fonds; F432, Clara Thomas fonds, and F447, Adele Wiseman fonds, for related records.
+-----+
Access points: 1. Laurence, Margaret, 1926-1987; 1. Laurence, Margaret, 1926-1987; 2. CORRESPONDENCE; 3. MANUSCRIPTS; 4. AUDIO ADAPTATIONS; 5. FRIENDS AND ASSOCIATES; 6. PICTORIAL WORKS.
+-----+
PLEASE NOTE THAT YOU CANNOT REQUEST RECORDS AT THIS LEVEL OF ARRANGEMENT. YOU MUST SEARCH AT A LOWER LEVEL IN ORDER TO IDENTIFY MATERIAL THAT CAN BE RETRIEVED FROM THE RECORDS CENTRE.
+-----+

Display Four

Screen 1

Margaret Laurence fonds.

Dates of Creation: 1953-1987.

Physical Description: 12 m of textual records. -- 260 photographs and other graphic materials (posters, drawings, etc.). -- 35 sound recordings. -- 6 moving image recordings.

Biographical History

Margaret Laurence (1926-1987), writer, was born in Neepawa, Manitoba and educated at United College in Winnipeg, Manitoba (BA 1947). Following her marriage to John Laurence (1947), she lived in Somaliland and the Gold Coast (now Somalia and Ghana), in the 1950s. Laurence returned to Canada in 1957. She moved to England in 1962 and returned to Canada in 1969. In 1974 she settled in Lakefield, Ontario. Laurence served as a writer-in-residence at the University of Toronto in 1969 and was named chancellor of Trent University (Peterborough, Ontario) in 1981. Laurence was a founding member of the Writers Union of Canada, but left the organization in a dispute over its acceptance of money from the Canadian government. Active in peace organizations and intensely interested in women's concerns, Laurence views and works did cause controversy. Her books drew criticism from certain elements in Laurence's adopted community. This group tried to have books removed from the school curriculum because of their alleged pornographic content. Margaret Laurence was the author of five novels, including the Manawaka quartet ('The stone angel,' 'A jest of God,' 'The fire dwellers,' 'The diviners,'), short stories, essays, travel memoirs and children's books. She was named a Companion of the Order of Canada (1971) and was awarded the Molson Prize in 1975.

Screen 2

Scope and Contents

The fonds consists of the following series:

S1006 Correspondence, 1962-1987

S1007 Financial records, 1961-1986

S1008 Manuscripts, 1953-1986

S1009 Printed materials, 1963-1987

S1010 Personal files, 1965-1987

S1011 Graphic materials, [196-?]1987

S1012 Sound recordings, 1973-1987

S1013 Moving image records, 1978-1987

Notes

Source of supplied title:

Title based on contents of the fonds.

Accessions:

ML1-5; 1989-039; 1989-046; 1990-012; 1992-015; 1990-025.

Access Condition:

Effective 1 January 1995, researchers wishing access to the Margaret Laurence fonds must sign the

Display Four continued

Screen 3

Access and Use Agreement form before Access is granted. Reading Room attendant note: Copies of the attached form are available in the Margaret Laurence Research and Reference file.	+
Additional Materials: There are Margaret Laurence manuscripts at McMaster University Library	
Related Materials: See the Enid Rutland fonds (Fonds 401); the Clara Thomas fonds (Fonds 432); and, the Adele Wiseman fonds (Fond 447).	
Index Note: File and item lists available.	
Search Terms	
Subjects: Laurence, Margaret, 1926-1987 -- Correspondence Laurence, Margaret, 1926-1987 -- Manuscripts Laurence, Margaret, 1926-1987 -- Audio Adaptations Laurence, Margaret, 1926-1987 -- Friends and Associates Laurence, Margaret, 1926-1987 -- Pictorial Works	
	+

Display Five

Screen 1

FONDS 341 SERIES 0 SUBSERIES 0
 FONDS: MARGARET LAURENCE FONDS
 INCLUSIVE DATES: 1953-1987.

EXTENT: 12 m of textual records and other material.

ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY OR BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: Margaret Laurence (1926-1987), writer, was born in Neepawa, Manitoba and educated at United College in Winnipeg, Manitoba (BA 1947). Following her marriage to John Laurence (1947), she lived in Somaliland and the Gold Coast (now Somalia and Ghana), in the 1950s. Laurence returned to Canada in 1957. She moved to England in 1962 and returned to Canada in 1969. In 1974 she settled in Lakefield, Ontario. Laurence served as writer-in-residence at the University of Toronto in 1969 and was named chancellor of Trent University (Peterborough, Ontario) in 1981. Laurence was a founding member of the Writers Union of Canada, but left the organization in a dispute over its acceptance of money from the Canadian government. Active in peace organizations and intensely interested in women's concerns, Laurence's views and works did cause controversy. Her books drew criticism from certain elements in Laurence's adopted community. This group tried to have books removed from the school curriculum because of their alleged pornographic content. Margaret Laurence was the author of five novels, including the *Manawaka*

Screen 1 continued

quartet ('The stone angel,' 'A jest of God,' 'The fire dwellers,' 'The diviners,'), short stories, essays, travel and children's books. She was named a Companion of the Order of Canada (1971) and was awarded the Molson Prize in 1975.

SCOPE NOTE: The fonds consists of the following series: S1006 Correspondence, 1962-1987; S1007 Financial records, 1961-1986; S1008 Manuscripts, 1953-1986; S1009 Printed materials, 1963-1987; S1010 Personal files, 1965-1987; S1011 Graphic materials, [196-?]-1987; S1012 Sound recordings, 1973-1987, S10013 Moving image records, 1978-1987.

SEE FINDING AID NUMBER INDICATED FOR COMPLETE LISTING OF RECORDS: File and item lists available.

TO ORDER FILES, USE FINDING AID IF AVAILABLE, IF NOT USE LOCATION NUMBER: ML1-5; 1989-039; 1989-046; 1992-012; 1990-025.

RESTRICTIONS TO ACCESS: Access is unrestricted. Effective 1 January 1995, researchers wishing to access the Margaret Laurence fonds must sign the Access and Use Agreement form before access is granted.

DETAILED PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 260 photographs and other graphic materials (posters, drawings, etc.), 35 sound recordings, 6 moving image recordings.

Display Five continued

Screen 2

See related material: There are Margaret Laurence manuscripts at McMaster University Library.

See Fonds 401, Enid Rutland fonds; F432, Clara Thomas fonds, and F447, Adele Wiseman fonds for related records.

1. Laurence, Margaret, 1926-1986 -- Manuscripts. 2. Laurence, Margaret, 1926-1987 -- Audio Adaptations. 3. Laurence, Margaret, 1926-1987 -- Correspondence. 4. Laurence, Margaret, 1926-1987 -- Friends and Associates. 5. Laurence, Margaret, 1926-1987 -- Pictorial Works.

Display Six

Screen 1

Fonds Description

F 1289***Margaret Laurence fonds***

Dates of creation: 1953-1987

12 m. of textual records
 260 photographs
 3 drawings
 35 audio reels
 6 reels of motion picture film

Biographical Sketch

Margaret Laurence (1926-1987) was a Canadian writer of fiction who authored five novels.

She was born in Neepawa, Manitoba and education and United College in Winnipeg, Manitoba (BA, 1947). Following her marriage to John Laurence (1947), she lived in Somaliland and the Gold Coast (now Somalia and Ghana), in the 1950's. Laurence returned to Canada in 1957. She moved to

Screen 2

England in 1962 and returned to Canada in 1969. In 1974 she settled in Lakefield, Ontario.

Laurence served as a writer-in-residence at the University of Toronto in 1969 and was name chancellor of Trent University in 1981. Laurence was a founding member of the Writer's Union of Canada, but left the organization in a dispute over its acceptance of money from the Canadian Government.

Active in peace organizations and intensely interested in women's concerns, Laurence views and works caused controversy. Her books drew criticism from certain elements in Laurence's adopted community when a group attempted to have books removed from the school curriculum because of their alleged pornographic content.

Margaret Laurence's was the author of five novels, including the Manawaka quartet of novels ("The stone angel", "A jest of God," "The fire dwellers," and "The diviners"), short stories, essays, travel memoirs and children's books. She was named a Companion of the Order of Canada (1971) and was awarded the Molson Prize in 1975.

Display Six continued

Screen 3

Immediate Source of Acquisition

The Margaret Laurence fonds was acquired from her daughter in 1989.

Scope and Content

Fonds consists of Margaret Laurence's records relating primarily to her career as an author. Few records in the fonds directly document her relationship with family members, her positions at Trent University or her involvement with other organizations.

Included are manuscripts documenting the research and development of several of her novels, and also contains manuscripts created by other writers. Fonds also includes clippings, articles and promotional materials about Laurence and her work, and financial records pertaining to all aspects of her life including extensive tax information. Fonds also contains date calendars, address books, curriculum vitae and honorary degrees.

Graphic materials include photos of Margaret Laurence and family, and drawings used in the production of her books. Audio reels contain interviews with Laurence and a number of her speeches and addresses, and films contain interview, a tribute, and the receipt of an honorary degree.

Screen 4

Restrictions

Records are subject to no access restrictions.

Terms governing use, reproduction or publication.

Copyright transferred to Archives of Ontario by donor. No restrictions on reproduction or publication of material for which the donor is authorized to transfer the copyright to the Archives, although the Archives permission is required for publication. Other material may require permission of third party copyright holders.

Finding Aids

An inventory is available for this fonds.

Notes

Title supplied from content of fonds.

How to Order Records

To order records, consult Inventory for fonds F 1289. Photographs are ordered and retrieved through the Special Collections Reading Room.