

## What is EAD?

Encoded archival description is a standard for encoding archival findings aids. It is an encoding language expressed in XML (eXtensible Markup Language) for representing finding aids online. It supports the general structure of finding aids used by archivists and comprises three primary groups of information:

- Administrative Information: Repository details, how the collection was acquired, access/usage restrictions, etc.
- Descriptive Information: Biographical or historical note about the creator of the collection, scope note, control access terms.
- Folder List: A list of the materials that make up the collection, by box, folder, item, or other designation.

## Why is EAD important?

EAD has become popular among the archival community and is currently being implemented by repositories throughout world. Written in XML, EAD is platform-independent, adaptable to the World Wide Web, and flexible enough to be used with a variety of collections. Daniel Pitti, the founder of EAD, initiated the following requirements of EAD: 1) ability to present extensive and interrelated descriptive information found in archival finding aids, 2) ability to preserve the hierarchical relationships existing between levels of description, 3) ability to represent descriptive information that is inherited by one hierarchical level from another, 4) ability to move within a hierarchical informational structure, and 5) support for element-specific indexing and retrieval (see: <http://www.loc.gov/ead/eaddev.html>)

## What is XML?

XML is a simplified version of Standard Generalized Markup Language (SGML), an International Organization for Standards (ISO) system for organizing and describing the content of an electronic document. A Document Type Definition (DTD) provides the rules for a specific implementation of XML. The DTD states what elements (also called tags) and attributes (additional information about an element) may be used, where and how each tag may be used, and which elements are allowed to occur within other elements (also called nesting).

The following is a brief introduction to XML elements and attributes; for an introduction to the EAD elements, see "Overview of EAD Tags" below.

**Element:** An element describes the data it contains. Elements are enclosed by angle brackets. Each use of an element must include both an opening tag and a closing tag. For example (elements are in bold):

- **<unittitle>**The Title of a Finding Aid Unit**</unittitle>**
- **<unitdate>**5 March 1997**</unitdate>**
- **<physdesc>**This collection includes 300 items.**</physdesc>**
- **<processinfo>**Collection processed by John Doe.**</processinfo>**
- **<persname>**John Quincy Adams**</persname>**

**Attribute:** Attributes provide additional information about elements. An attribute name must be followed by an equals sign (=) and the value of the attribute must be enclosed in double quotation marks (""). For example (attributes are in bold):

- **<container type="Box">**4**</container>**
- **<unitdate normal="1997-03-05">**March 5, 1997**</unitdate>**
- **<persname source="lcnaf" encodinganalog="600" role="subject" normal="Adams, John Quincy, |d1767-1848">**John Quincy Adams**</persname>**
- For names and subjects, if claiming a source (like lcnaf), make sure content is actual authorized form

- Likewise, if not using authorized form or no authorized form is available, do not put in a source attribute or use **source="local"**
- If using the authority file to acquire authorized name form, obtain id number from authority file and add as @authfilenumber (limited to the control access terms/indexing section in archdesc/controlaccess)

*Note:* XML is case-sensitive. For example, <PersName> is not the same element as <persname>.

## The basic sections of an EAD finding aid

The three basic sections of an EAD finding aid are:

- EAD header <eadheader>: This section provides information about the electronic finding aid itself. It contains elements regarding the title of the collection, the processor and the encoder. It also includes revision details. This section is for internal use only.
- Archival Description <archdesc>: This section is the core of the EAD finding aid. It includes administrative and descriptive information about the collection
- Inventory <dsc>: This section lists the boxes and folders and organizes them according to the series and subseries hierarchy of the collection as appropriate.

For a description and definition of each EAD element/tag go to: <http://www.loc.gov/ead/tglib/>

<ead> Outermost wrapper for the whole finding aid

<eadheader> Wrapper for description of the electronic finding aid (not of the collection itself)

<eadid> Unique identifier of the electronic finding aid

<filedesc> Description of the electronic finding aid. Includes title, date, processor

<profiledesc> Description of how the electronic finding aid was created: date, encoder

<revisiondesc> Records any changes to the electronic finding aid

<archdesc> Wrapper for the description of the collection itself

<did> Descriptive identification: bundles core information about the described materials

<repository> Name, address, phone, email of repository

<origination> Creator of the collection in catalog authority form

<unittitle> Title of the collection

<unitdate> Dates of the collection

<unitid> Collection number

<physdesc> Size of the collection

<extent> Number of linear feet and/or number of items always use the same terminology within a single repository to describe extent

<langmaterial> Language of the described unit (can apply to the finding aid itself (within <eadheader> or the language of the collection if it occurs within <archdesc>)

<abstract> Summary of the collection's scope

<bioghist> Biographical or historical note about the creator of the collection

<p> Paragraph designation, where the text is placed

<chronlist> Chronological list of relevant dates or events

<descgrp type="descriptive"> Descriptive group – wraps a group of elements that describe the collection.

<head>Collection information</head>

<arrangement> The organization and/or arrangement of the collection

<p>

<scopecontent> Scope and content note

<p>

<accessrestrict> Restrictions on access to the collection

<userrestrict> Usage restrictions

<prefercite> Preferred citation for researchers

<descgrp type="administrative"> Descriptive group - wraps a group of elements relating to administration of collection.

```
<head>Administrative information</head>
<acqinfo> Acquisition information (mode of acquisition, accession #)
<processinfo> Processing information (name of collection processor, date)
<custodhist> Provenance
<accruals> Schedule of additions to the collection
<appraisal> Appraisal decisions
```

<descgrp type="cataloging"> Descriptive group – wraps groups of elements providing access points (subjects headings) for the collection.

```
<controlaccess> Wraps key name access points to the collection
  <head>Names</head>
  <persname> Personal name
  <corpname> Corporate name
  <famname> Family name
  <geogname> Geographical name
<controlaccess> Wraps key subject access points to the collection
  <head>Subjects</head>
  <subject> Subject terms
<controlaccess> Wraps key genre access points to the collection
  <head>Types of Materials</head>
  <genreform> Genre form
<controlaccess> Wraps key occupation access points to the collection
  <head>Occupations</head>
  <occupation> Occupation terms
<controlaccess> Wraps mandatory RIAMCO specific access point to the collection
  <head>RIAMCO Browsing Term</head>
  <subject altrender="nodisplay" source="riamco">[RIAMCO Subject]</subject>
```

<descgrp type="additional"> Descriptive group – wraps a group of elements providing additional information about the collection.

```
<odd> Information about the collection that does not fit into any other element
<separatedmaterial> Material that has been removed from the collection (i.e. photos, duplicates, etc.)
<relatedmaterial> Related collections
<originalsloc> Location of original materials when copies are being described in finding aid
<otherfindiad> Additional or alternative guides to the described material (i.e. card files, dealers' inventories, or lists)
<bibliography> Citations to sources of additional information
```

<dsc> Description of boxes and folders

```
<c id="1" type="series"> Component, first level (usually a series)
  <did> Descriptive identification (required wrapper element)
    <unittitle> Title of component (series, subseries, file, etc.)
    <unitdate> Date or date range associated with the component
<c id="2" type="subseries">Component 2nd level (e.g. subseries, file, or item)
  <did>
    <container> Container types such as box, folder, oversize, etc.
    <unittitle>
    <unitdate>
<c id="3" type="file"> Component 3rd level (e.g. file or item)
  <container> Container types such as box, folder, oversize, etc.
  <unittitle>
  <unitdate>
```