

**Society of American Archivists  
Council Meeting  
August 12 – 13, 2013  
New Orleans, Louisiana**

**Standards Committee: Revision of Description for the  
Technical Subcommittee on  
*Describing Archives: A Content Standard (TS-DACS)*  
(Prepared by Co-chairs Cory Nimer and Lisa Miller)**

In order to better maintain *Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACS)*, TS-DACS proposed to the Standards Committee that changes be made in standards maintenance procedures to allow for an ongoing review of *DACS*. The Standards Committee has proposed these changes and, contingent on their approval, submits accompanying recommendations for structural changes to TS-DACS for the Council's review and approval.

**BACKGROUND**

Following the Council's January 23, 2013, decision to adopt the second edition of *DACS*, steps have been taken to make the new standard available in both print and electronic formats. With the flexibility provided by electronic publication, the Technical Subcommittee on *DACS* proposed that its charge be changed to allow the group to update the standard on an ongoing basis. While the proposal seemed reasonable to the Committee, it was recognized that this would require a revision in existing procedures. A proposal for these changes in Committee procedures has been submitted to the Council for review (see 0813 Agenda Item 1-II.A.).

To support the shift from cyclical review of *DACS* to an ongoing review, some structural changes to the subcommittee become necessary, primarily in terms of the subcommittee's membership. When TS-DACS was established in February 2010, appointments were made for the entire review cycle (2010-2015). With an ongoing review, it will be necessary for members to join the subcommittee on a rotating basis.

To facilitate modification of the TS-DACS charge, Subcommittee Chair Gordon Daines has submitted a draft revision of the document (see **Appendix A**). This document includes the shift from cyclical to ongoing review, the membership changes mentioned above, as well adjustments in language. It also drops reference to the responsibility for reviewing NISO accreditation for *DACS* based on the Standards Committee's investigation of ANSI membership in 2012.

## DISCUSSION

The five-year review cycle established for *Describing Archives: A Content Standard* was an attempt to improve the responsiveness of the standards review process. The timing also would seem to be tied to the publication process, as maintaining a stable text allows time for the printing and sale of the standard. However, with the movement toward online distribution of *DACS*, the barrier to updates presented by print publication is less of an issue. Maintaining the text electronically also allows for more frequent updates to the standard to meet evolving needs.

The proposed changes to the TS-DACS charge (see **Appendix A**) place the standard on an ongoing review cycle and make some associated changes in the subcommittee's membership. These include establishing rotating membership, the addition of selected *ex officio* members, and an adjustment in responsibilities.

As the change in review status essentially makes TS-DACS a standing subcommittee,<sup>1</sup> it is necessary to modify the membership to allow members to rotate on and off in a staggered pattern. For the current members, Daines has provided the following schedule for rotation off the subcommittee:

- Gordon Daines (rotate in 2015), chair
- Hillel Arnold (rotate in 2016)
- Jackie Dean (rotate in 2016)
- Sibyl Schaefer (rotate in 2015)
- Mary Lacy (rotate in 2014)
- Claudia Thompson (rotate in 2015)
- Vacancy to be filled (2013-2016)

The changes also request that three of the SAA representatives to external organizations participate more closely with TS-DACS. These include the representatives to the Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access (CC:DA); the MARC Advisory Committee; and the International Council on Archives Experts Group on Archival Description (ICA-EGAD). By including the representatives to library and archival organizations, TS-DACS should be able to more closely monitor changes in the standards environment.

These changes to the charge should enable TS-DACS to be more responsive in its maintenance of the standard. However, changing the subcommittee to an ongoing review process may lead to increased requests by the Standards Committee to the SAA Council to approve updates to *DACS*. The SAA Council, or the Standards Committee under its charge, will also need to review the status of the technical subcommittee on a regular basis to ensure that the standard continues to meet the needs of the archival community.

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<sup>1</sup> Staff note: TS-DACS already is considered a subcommittee to which the Vice President makes appointments. See [http://saa.archivists.org/4DCGI/committees/SAACS-TSDACS.html?Action=Show\\_Comm\\_Detail&CommCode=SAA\\*\\*CS-TSDACS&](http://saa.archivists.org/4DCGI/committees/SAACS-TSDACS.html?Action=Show_Comm_Detail&CommCode=SAA**CS-TSDACS&).

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT the revised charge for the Technical Subcommittee for *Describing Archives: A Content Standard*, as provided in Appendix A, be adopted.**

**Support Statement:** Revision of the technical subcommittee's procedures will provide the option for ongoing review of the standard, allowing the group to respond to change proposals in a more timely fashion.

**Impact on Strategic Plan Goals:** The changes in procedure support the Society's Strategic Goals of participating in new standard development (3.1), participating in collaborations (3.2), and providing up-to-date publications (2.1).

**Fiscal Impact:** No anticipated direct costs associated with the changes.

## Appendix A: Revised Draft of Technical Subcommittee for Describing Archives: A Content Standard (TS-DACS) Charge

[Additions are in blue underlined text, with deletions in blue strike-through. The full version of the current document is available online at [http://saa.archivists.org/4DCGI/committees/SAACS-TSDACS.html?Action=Show\\_Comm\\_Detail&CommCode=SAA\\*\\*CS-TSDACS&.\]](http://saa.archivists.org/4DCGI/committees/SAACS-TSDACS.html?Action=Show_Comm_Detail&CommCode=SAA**CS-TSDACS&.)

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**Reports to:** Standards Committee

**Established:** August 14, 2010

### I. Purpose

The Technical Subcommittee on *Describing Archives: A Content Standard* (TS-DACS) of the SAA Standards Committee is responsible for overseeing the timely and ongoing intellectual and technical maintenance and development of *Describing Archives: A Content Standard* (DACS). *DACS* is an output-neutral set of rules for describing archives, personal papers, and manuscript collections, and can be applied to all material types. *DACS* is compatible with ISAD(G): General International Standard Archival Description, 2nd ed. (International Council Congress on Archives, 1999) and ISAAR(CPF): International Standard Archival Authority Records for Corporate Bodies, Persons and Families, 2nd ed. (International Council on Archives, 2003). *DACS* is an SAA-approved standard; documentation for *DACS* is available through the Society of American Archivists at <http://www.archivists.org/governance/standards/dacs.asp> .

### II. Committee Selection, Size, and Length of Term

~~The TS-DACS shall be charged for five years, beginning August 2010. After five years, if Describing Archives: A Content Standard continues to be an approved standard of SAA, the TS-DACS shall be re-charged for a subsequent review cycle.~~

~~The members and chair(s) of the TS-DACS shall be appointed for the length of time necessary to complete a revision of DACS, which shall not exceed five years. The technical subcommittee shall be composed of no less than five individuals who are members of SAA of seven members (including one chair) appointed by the SAA vice president / president-elect for staggered three-year terms so that a minimum of two individuals are appointed by the Vice President each year. The technical subcommittee shall have no less than five members who are members of SAA. All members shall demonstrate significant knowledge of and experience with archival description generally, and with DACS specifically.~~

~~SAA members of the TS-DACS shall be recommended by the Standards Committee for appointment by the Vice President. Members and chairs may be reappointed to the TS-~~

~~DACS for consecutive review cycles, but at least one new SAA member must be appointed per review cycle.~~

All members of TS-DACS shall be recommended by the Standards Committee for appointment by the SAA Vice President. The chair will be selected from existing TS-DACS membership and appointed for a three year term. The chair and members of TS-DACS may be reappointed for one consecutive term.

*Ex officio* members of the Technical Subcommittee on DACS shall include the following if they are not regular members of the subcommittee:

- Co-chairs of the Standards Committee;
- Chair of the Description Section;
- Society of American Archivists' representative to Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access (CC:DA);
- Society of American Archivists' representative to the MARC Advisory Committee;
- Society of American Archivists' representative to International Council on Archives Experts Group on Archival Description (ICA-EGAD) [formerly International Council on Archives Committee on Best Practices and Standards].

### **III. Reporting Procedures**

The chair (~~or co-chairs~~) of the Technical Subcommittee on *DACS* shall report at least annually to the chair(s) of the SAA Standards Committee on the occasion of the SAA Annual Meeting. If extramural funding is obtained by SAA, the chair (~~or co-chairs~~) shall provide all necessary narrative reports to the SAA office in order that the reporting requirements of SAA and the funding source are met.

### **IV. Duties and Responsibilities**

To fulfill this mission, TS-DACS is specifically charged to:

- Carry out a review of *Describing Archives: A Content Standard* ~~at least every five years and revise as needed~~ on an ongoing basis.
- Promote the understanding and use of DACS by the American archival community.
- Support educational efforts related to DACS by SAA.
- Develop members of the archives profession who are capable of promoting and maintaining DACS over time.
- Communicate its activities to relevant SAA components.
- Foster communication between other entities developing standards related to DACS.
- Work to ensure that DACS is compatible with other national and international descriptive standards.

- ~~Investigate expansion of the DACS standard to a national standard in conjunction with the American National Standards Institute. A report and recommendations will be submitted to the Standards Committee in 2013.~~

TS-DACS shall work within the guidelines for ongoing review of an SAA-adopted standard, and may develop more detailed procedures for meeting those requirements.

## **VI. Meetings**

TS-DACS shall carry out its charge primarily via electronic mail, regular mail, and conference calls. It shall meet at the SAA Annual Meeting and as necessary, provided that SAA Council-approved funding is available.