Extension of DACS Working Group/Technical Subcommittee
(Prepared by Margery Sly, Council Liaison to Standards Committee)

BACKGROUND

At its February 2010 meeting, the Council approved the following motion:

THAT the charge of the DACS Working Group (to be renamed the DACS Technical Subcommittee) be extended through May 2010, with the responsibilities of 1) monitoring how Resource Description and Access (RDA) and DACS will interact, 2) pursuing further discussion related to the revision with the RDA implementation groups (The Library of Congress, the British Library, Library and Archives Canada, and the National Library of Australia), and 3) coordinating with interested professional groups and subgroups (possibly including, but not limited to, the American Library Association’s Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access [CC:DA], the ALA’s Committee on Machine-Readable Recording of Bibliographic Information [MARBI], and the International Council on Archives Committee on Descriptive Standards);

THAT the DACS Technical Subcommittee be repopulated; and

THAT the DACS Technical Subcommittee work with the Standards Committee to draft recommendations for Council consideration in May 2010 for a new technical subcommittee charge and time line for review and maintenance of DACS.

Support Statement: Given the importance of DACS within the archives community, it is appropriate that the group charged with its review and maintenance be fully aware of other developing standards that may have an impact on DACS. The group best prepared to comment on the potential “interaction” of DACS and RDA is the current DACS Working Group (to be renamed DACS Technical Subcommittee if Standards Committee recommendations in Agenda Item 0210-III-J-StdsCommMission are adopted by the Council).

Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACS) was officially approved by the Society of American Archivists as an SAA standard in March 2005, following review by the Standards Committee, the Technical Subcommittee for Descriptive Standards, and the general archives community. In October 2006, the Council approved a five-year review cycle for the standard and established the DACS Working Group. Later, the Council amended that review period in favor of a full review to be completed by 2009. The DACS Working Group did not complete the required review in that time frame due both to time pressures on its members and their interest in seeing how DACS might interact with RDA.
DISCUSSION

Since February, several issues again have arisen to prevent the reactivated DACS Technical Subcommittee from completing the initial steps of its extended charge: The chair of the DACSTS was in the process of changing jobs, and no other member of the subcommittee stepped forward to lead the work. Some subcommittee members have expressed discouragement at the slow process of the review and do not wish to have their service extended. Conflicting opinions of the impact of RDA on DACS have led some members to believe that no planning work should be done until work on the RDA is complete and some members to believe that the RDA team is not interested in receiving archivists’ input, making a wait unnecessary.

Although the current chair expressed interest in August 2009 to lead the initial review work of the committee and although having some continuity between the DACSWG and the DACSTS would be valuable, both leadership and subcommittee members are needed in order for work to move forward.

RECOMMENDATIONS

THAT the SAA Council ask the Vice President to appoint a new chair and as many extended and new members to the DACS Technical Subcommittee as needed for full functionality;

THAT the DACS Technical Subcommittee have the short-term responsibility of 1) monitoring how Resource Description and Access (RDA) and DACS will interact, 2) pursuing further discussion related to the revision with the RDA implementation groups (The Library of Congress, the British Library, Library and Archives Canada, and the National Library of Australia), and 3) coordinating with interested professional groups and subgroups (possibly including, but not limited to, the American Library Association’s Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access [CC:DA], the ALA’s Committee on Machine-Readable Recording of Bibliographic Information [MARBI], and the International Council on Archives Committee on Descriptive Standards); and

THAT the DACS Technical Subcommittee work with the Standards Committee to draft recommendations for Council consideration in August 2010 for a new technical subcommittee charge and time line for review and maintenance of DACS.

Support Statement: Given the importance of DACS within the archives community and the fact that it is one of the few standards that SAA maintains, it is important to ensure that the Society have a technical subcommittee charged with the responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the standard and for maintaining full awareness of other developing standards that may have an impact on DACS, and that the review of DACS proceed based on an established time line.

Fiscal Impact: Nominal; the DACSTS may hold one or more conference calls to coordinate work and/or to discuss report recommendations.