

The table below represents all of the statistics for continuing education (CE) courses offered by SAA for the past 7 years (basically 1993-present). The SAA office has very little in the way of statistics on past CE offerings. The information used to assemble the statistics below was gathered from information in issues of *Archival Outlook* from the period 1993-present, from SAA CE flyers, and from follow up e-mail exchanges with as many CE instructors identified in the first 2 data sources as I could contact.

You'll notice that CE courses on description and automation make up slightly over a third of SAA's CE offerings during the time period examined. Of those 67 courses, a third were EAD workshops.

Description & automation (includes EAD)	67	34.36%
Basic archives & special collections	11	5.64%
Legislative collections	3	1.54%
Photographic collections & digital imaging	20	10.26%
Film & audio collections	4	2.05%
Business records	8	4.10%
Appraisal	8	4.10%
Electronic records	14	7.18%
Management (includes fundraising, outreach & public relations, donor relations, remodelling/new facilities) [approx. 10 different courses]	16	8.21%
Security & disaster preparedness	3	1.54%
Preservation (includes microfilming)	8	4.10%
Oral history	6	3.08%
World Wide Web & SGML (not EAD)	13	6.67%
Training & case teaching/writing	9	4.62%
Copyright/fair use	5	2.56%
Total CE Course Offerings	195	

In the table below I've listed alphabetically the individual CE course titles that make up the 67 description and automation offerings and the number of times they were offered during the time period examined. The middle column represents my feeble attempt (see below) to broadly categorize these course offerings.

Access points	B	6
Advanced concepts in authority control	B	2
Application of the USMARC format	A	6
APPM and archival cataloging	C	3
Archival cataloging as a component of description	C	8
Archives, personal papers and manuscripts	C	5
Automating finding guides	D	2
Automating processing practices and finding guides	D	1
Encoded archival description	E	21
Introduction to issues in automating archival description	D	1
Planning automated archival information systems	D	1
Understanding the USMARC format for archival and manuscripts control	A	6
USMARC format for archives and manuscripts	A	5

The table below contains some notes on these groupings (the alpha categorization matches the middle column in the table above) and some totals to help give some sort of overall snapshot of SAA's CE offerings in the area of description and automation during the time period 1993-present. I stress that this way of slicing it up represents my thoughts; there are probably other ways to look at this data that could contribute to our discussion.

A. USMARC format	17
B. Access points/authority control (benefit of doubt that these didn't focus exclusively on USMARC; if they did, they could be lumped in with the above)	8
C. APPM (again, benefit of doubt that this didn't focus exclusively on USMARC; if it did, it could be lumped in with the above)	16
A+B+C. Arguable subtotal of USMARC related courses	41
D. Automation issues (without stretching too far, one might argue that at least 2 of these courses look fairly USMARC-centric as well and add those to the above total)	5
E. EAD	21

The following are some thoughts/conclusions/questions that I've had based on the data above and on other readings, conversations, observations that I've done/had/made over the past few years. I would love to hear from any of you regarding whether or not you think I'm way off base or basically seeing things the

way they are, and if you have other thoughts, conclusions, questions, and concerns that you would like to contribute to this discussion.

- SAA's continuing education offerings in the area of archival description have been almost exclusively centered around the application of two specific data structure standards: USMARC and EAD.
- There seems to be an implicit understanding that archivists come into the field with a solid understanding of the descriptive elements required for a "good" archival description and that SAA needn't offer a foundation course on which CE courses on the implementation of specific formats might build. What doesn't appear in this data, but what I assume is true based on knowing who designed and taught many of these CE courses, is that many of the courses had a component focus on the descriptive elements that comprise a "good" archival description, but that the content of each course in this area was probably different depending on the focus of the course and who taught it over the years.
- It seems to me that reliance on any firm grounding gained from whatever training archivists get prior to hanging out their shingle regarding either the principles underlying archival description, or the descriptive elements required for a "good" archival description might not be the best assumption on which to ground any future SAA description curriculum. I wonder what percentage of archivists in the U.S., for example, could articulate the differences between bibliographic and archival description? How many could comfortably explain the practical implications of multi-level description in archival descriptive tools, be they hand-written, machine-processed, or electronic?
- My own personal experience with archival graduate programs at Univ. of Michigan and UCLA is that students often graduate without a clear understanding of either principles underlying archival description, or what descriptive elements constitute a "good" archival description. Description isn't required as a course, is covered only fleetingly in basic archival survey course, and students only get adequate descriptive training serendipitously depending on where they either work or do internships while they are in school. Even this work/interning doesn't usually involve learning underlying principles or the elements of a "good" description, but rather it involves learning how description is done at a particular institution (vs. *why* it is done that way and how and why it has evolved over the years.) I don't know firsthand how it is at other institutions that train archival graduate students, but I suspect the situation is fairly similar.
- U.S. archivists by and large have not dealt with the only standardized attempt to articulate what descriptive elements constitute a "good" archival description: ISAD(G). It may be taught in a few graduate archival programs, but I suspect that these are far and away in the minority. I assume that the SAA's EAD workshops touch on ISAD(G), but that this is only a cursory mention. It would be surprising if the MARC-focused workshops mentioned ISAD(G) at all.
- The question that I have is this: if you accept the above assessment of the state of graduate archival education in the area of description, what can SAA

do about it? What is the appropriate role for the national organization in addressing a situation that, in essence, makes it difficult, if not impossible in some instances, for workshops and their instructors to build on a firm, shared conceptual foundation in discussions and exercises geared towards the application of one or another specific data structure format to an individual student's employing repository?

- Even if SAA adopts the position that it should abandon offering low-cost, introductory workshops in areas like description to the regional archival organizations, it seems to me that SAA needs to take the lead in coordinating the development of a curriculum and materials for these workshops and, perhaps, in training the workshop instructors, or ensuring that workshop instructors for regional archival organizations are teaching, at some level, a common understanding of the principles underlying archival description.
- Does a multi-level descriptive CE curriculum for U.S. archivists make sense? What might some of the levels/courses in such an infrastructure be?
- Aside from courses in the basics of archival description and those focusing on the application of particular data structure or data content standards, what other courses in the area of description might there be? Are there advanced workshops or seminars that SAA might offer that could attract or stimulate practitioners who have been in the profession for a while? If so, what topics might these address?
- Would SAA benefit from a regularized review of its description (and for that matter, in other areas as well) curriculum every 3-5 years to insure that it stays pertinent and up-to-date as the arena in which archivists practice continues to change? If so, what mechanisms do you think might insure that a regularized review percolates down into a revised curriculum? Who should be involved in such a review?