

The Benefits of Planning: Cataloging the Vertical Files of the Anton Brees Carillon Library

Joy M. Banks, MSLS

Jaime L. Fogel, MLS

Abstract

In 2013, Bok Tower Gardens received a Council on Library and Information Resources Cataloging Hidden Special Collections and Archives grant to catalog the vertical files of the Anton Brees Carillon Library. This paper will discuss the key elements of laying the groundwork for this project and how the careful consideration of software selection, processing and cataloging standards, and future access to and dissemination of the information prior to the project's start has helped ensure a smoother, more successful project.


In 2013, Bok Tower Gardens (BTG) was awarded a Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) Cataloging Hidden Special Collections and Archives grant to catalog the vertical files of the Anton Brees Carillon Library—a unique collection encompassing more than 80 linear feet and 40 boxes of materials related to the carillon, an instrument of at least 23 bells in chromatic series, and the professionals that play them. This collection is only a portion of what is often considered one of the world's largest collections of carillon related materials (Figure 1). Receipt of the grant was the culmination of years of planning and preparing and was a significant step toward the successful processing of this hidden collection. The careful consideration of software selection, processing and cataloging standards, and future access to and dissemination of the information before starting the project has helped ensure a smoother, more successful project.

Pre-Grant

Although flexibility is essential in any project, especially when working with hidden collections, project planners and managers should take time before project implementation to prepare adequately. While not every question can be



Fig. 1: Items from the Anton Brees Carillon Library



addressed before a project starts, pre-planning serves as a valuable exercise to save time and resources later. Planning may involve thinking about the audience for the collection and how they will interact with the materials; imagining how the users will want to access the materials; considering time spent for physical arrangement versus time for thorough description; and realizing how much can be done in-house versus any outsourcing needs. Considering these factors in advance will help reduce interruptions to the project workflow and streamline processing even when unexpected challenges arise.


Planning for the Anton Brees Carillon Library (ABCL) project began even before the grant application was complete. For several years the librarian, the principal investigator (PI) for the grant, had been evaluating and arranging the library's collection in preparation for a large-scale cataloging project. On the basis of this initial evaluation, two collections were ultimately selected for inclusion in the CLIR grant: the vertical files of the ABCL and the archives of the Guild of Carillonners in North America (GCNA). Inclusion of the GCNA archives in the project was due in large part to an official agreement brokered by the librarian for housing the archives at BTG. Though the GCNA archives have been housed in the ABCL since 1993, no formal agreement existed until 2012. When that agreement was made, it provided only for minimal care and processing for the GCNA archives because the ABCL staffing at the time was .5 FTE. At the time of the agreement, a recommendation was made to the GCNA to streamline its holdings to focus exclusively on its history and story of the professional association. The scope of the existing GCNA collection overlapped many of the ABCL files, so this recommendation would allow for collection right-sizing, conserving space, and

shifting redundant materials from the GCNA to either fill gaps in the ABCL collection or be disposed of appropriately.

Grant Writing Process

During the grant writing process, several decisions were made based on work done in previous years. The CLIR grant provided funding for the greatest collection need: people. The librarian's time with the collections clearly showed that the only way to undertake a successful project was through more hands helping with the collections. While volunteers offered support, the scale of processing the vertical files and GCNA archives required more dedicated staffing. The first request in the grant was to increase the librarian's hours to full time, allowing a 50 percent commitment to the grant, hiring a second full-time employee dedicated to the project, and hiring a series of interns over three summers.

The grant application also required certain details about software and processing plans for the project. ABCL had recently acquired a Quick Start version of OCLC's CONTENTdm through state access to OCLC's FirstSearch database, and it was determined that this software would be best suited to the project. Not only did CONTENTdm provide customization possibilities for the unique aspects of the collection, it also allowed for easy uploading to OCLC's WorldCat database, making the newly created records almost instantly available to an international audience. The hope was to provide users with one place to access all digital assets rather than parsing various holdings out to separate databases. CONTENTdm also offered the hosting services that the ABCL needed. Because the Quick Start version only allowed limited entries, the request was made to upgrade the subscription, a significant cost, and slowly have the Gardens take over the annual cost of the product.



The collections grow annually, so it was necessary to find a method that could adequately describe what existed while allowing for future growth. Because CLIR emphasizes interoperability with other collections, we chose to implement EAD finding aids. This would allow a resource to be created for the GCNA archives, each of the individual carillons documented in the ABCL, the various bell foundries, and any individuals of significance. Items that fell outside the scope of these broad categories (such as audio recordings or other ephemera) would be cataloged individually.

After Grant Award Notice

The grant application process took several months to complete. While the librarian was hoping that the project would be accepted, work continued as usual in the library. When the award letter arrived in December, the librarian set the project in motion by hiring the library special projects assistant (PA).

First, we conducted a pre-inventory to get a broad sense of the materials to establish hierarchies for the finding aids. These hierarchies would also guide the physical arrangement as processing began. Although physical arrangement is often part of the structure of the collection, the ABCL and GCNA collections had no such limitations. Plans were made to maximize space and consolidate holdings, and processing space was limited. Bearing in mind the condition of the materials, that they are on two different floors, and that the spaces are often used for tours, a physical workflow was created to use a lesser-used archive space. The pre-inventory also determined the order of handling the materials to minimize reprocessing.

The ABCL had no tools for creating EAD finding aids, and we did research on various no-

low-cost options by reaching out to various listservs and forums, including CLIR, Society of American Archivists, Connecting to Collections, Gold Coast Archives, and the Florida Opening Archives program. We received numerous suggestions and further researched options including Archon, Archivists Toolkit, ArchivesSpace, PastPerfect, Excel, and Access.

It is worth mentioning that as this project started and research was conducted, EAD 3 had not yet been released. The PA worked with John Nemmers, descriptive and technical services archivist at the University of Florida and co-chair of the Florida Opening Archives Program, to determine the best course of action regarding this update. Its pending release meant that there would not be as many tools available using EAD 3, much less ones that would suit the needs and limitations of this project. Ultimately, we decided to forego EAD 3 and proceed with creating finding aids using EAD 2002, with the idea that they could be migrated in the future.

Many of the most popular tools for creating EAD finding aids are not feasible options for smaller collecting institutions. Open source software databases such as Archon, Archivists' Toolkit, and ArchivesSpace require knowledge of computer programming, investment of funds, or server storage space and support. We investigated more readily accessible options to implement EAD finding aids in our collections.

The PI and PA decided that using Microsoft Access had much merit. Access is pre-installed on nearly every computer with a Windows operating system, including those at Bok Tower Gardens, and is thus available at no additional cost. When installed on a shared server, an Access database allows multiple users access simultaneously. The software also includes the ability to create forms,

making the input of information easier than using an Excel spreadsheet, and information can be exported into various formats including Excel spreadsheets, XML, and PDF, as well as text and Word documents. The team was also excited that, should the notion of using Access be successful, it would be a simple solution that could be shared with other libraries and archives, a primary goal stated in the grant application.

Further research was conducted to see if such a database already existed, to avoid unnecessarily creating one from scratch. The National Library of Medicine (NLM) offers a free Access database to members of the [History of Medicine Finding Aids consortium](#). Although Bok Tower Gardens is not a member, John Rees, archivist and digital resource manager at the National Library of Medicine, was kind enough to share the database. He explained that although they have switched to a web application and no longer use the Access database, it should still be an effective tool for creating EAD finding aids.

NLM's Access database proved to be a valuable tool, allowing the user to input information into unintimidating forms and automatically creating EAD finding aids that could be exported in XML. Because the database was created for use in medical libraries, it needed modifications to suit the needs of the ABCL's collections.

Some changes needed were merely cosmetic, such as removing the NLM's logo and replacing it with BTG's (Figure 2). More fundamental changes tested the limits of the PA's coding skills to ensure that both the visible and behind-the-scenes elements were correct and without error. The PA continued to work with Mr. Nemmers to ensure that the EAD output followed the ["Best Practice Guidelines for the Implementation of EAD Version 2002 in Florida Institutions,"](#) a standard selected for use in the grant application process.

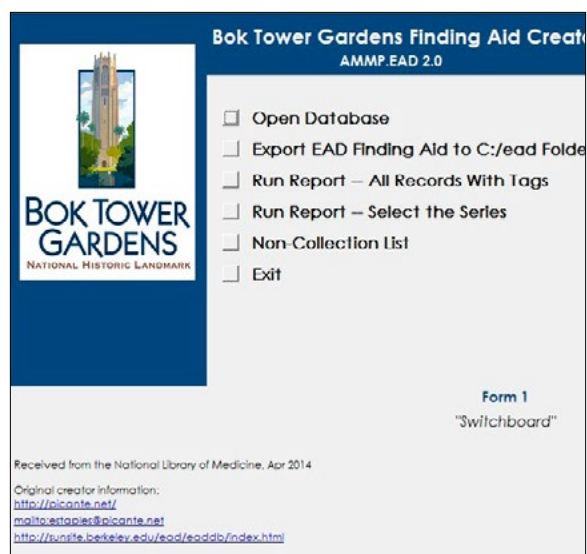


Fig. 2: Edited NLM Access front page

The PA also added the functionality to export the finding aids as PDFs. With this added feature, an organization or individual can now input their information into the Access database easily using its convenient input forms, and choose XML or PDF as export options with a single click (Figure 3). The resultant export can then be shared or uploaded in other systems.

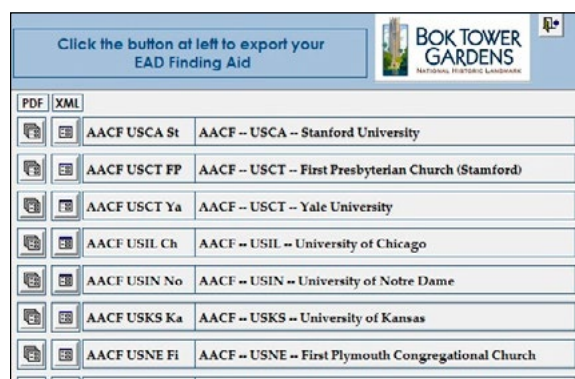


Fig. 3: One-click functionality for PDF or XML export

The NLM's original database instruction manual had not been updated to reflect later changes, creating minor obstacles in learning the database's nuances. These were quickly overcome and a new version of the manual was created.

Once we established the system to publish and how to create finding aids, we turned our attention to the daunting task of physical processing and arrangement. Three interns were hired for the first summer of the grant project to help process the collection. Following the workflow created by the PI and PA, the interns started by moving the entire GCNA collection from its two locations to the temporary workspace. Items that would clearly be shifted into the ABCL files were set aside, while the sorting of the remaining GCNA collection commenced.

Immediately, the PA needed to devise a system to allow multiple interns working on different days to easily sort the materials while always knowing where the last person left off and where work



Fig. 4: Interns at work around our divided table

should begin. The workspace was a large table where the team sat, each with a stack of documents to be sorted into the predetermined series. The table was sectioned off using masking tape and marked to keep the delineation of the different series (Figure 4).

During the first few days of sorting the GCNA collection, it was discovered that this hidden collection was not as simple as it first appeared. The Guild activities and collected materials were complex, and it became clear that the hierarchy initially created was not the best solution for arrangement. The end user's potential use of the collection was constantly kept in mind. Exercising flexibility and remembering the old adage that getting it right is more important than getting it done quickly, the hierarchy was readjusted and sorting corrected.

After the initial broad sort by series, each was then sorted by subseries. This stage of the process raised many questions and challenges to consider moving forward:

- Documenting copyright permission to the GCNA vs. from the GCNA;
- Retaining the personal experiences of individuals attending the annual congresses while limiting space-consuming and unnecessary duplicates;
- Storing music manuscripts that do not fit in the vertical cabinets;
- Accounting for gaps in the collection, especially in the later years as more business was conducted electronically; and
- Capturing the grey areas of the organization, which often blur not only the responsibilities of different individuals and committees but also their professional and personal lives.



Fig. 5: Several examples of bell-related findings

Anyone who has processed an archival collection knows that many interesting items are uncovered when sorting through archival materials, and this collection was no exception. The team learned more than they ever expected to about the GCNA, the intriguing personal lives of the members of the Guild, and, of course, bells, bells, bells, and more bells. We discovered items unrelated to the scope of the collection, which had been retained simply because they contained the image of a bell. In fact, a new processing section was created for just such items: “Oh look, there’s a bell!” (Figure 5).

The first summer of the project, with the assistance of the three interns, approximately 60 linear feet of materials were processed, including the most at-risk materials, which were housed in deteriorating boxes. The physical processing included rehousing items into acid-free folders as needed. Doing this during the sorting process allowed for appropriate grouping and descriptive labeling.


After completing the sort of the GCNA collection, we moved the materials back into their vertical

filing cabinets, with some room left for growth of this active collection. Then the sorting of the second portion, the ABCL vertical files, began. Processing of these materials is ongoing as we create were finding aids for each of the carillons in North America, as well as many foreign carillons, notable carillonners and members of the GCNA about whom the ABCL has information, each bell foundry that produces carillon bells, and a smattering of other related topics.

Creating Finding Aids

As the physical processing of the collections advances, the creation of the finding aids will begin. Some finding aids for individual carillons were created during the employment of the summer interns. This allowed them to gain experience with the process, adding to the skill set they could list for future employment. The interns each provided valuable testing services, too, because they used the instructional manual to create the finding aids in the Access database. This process brought several issues to light that could then be fixed and retested prior to intensive finding aid creation. The creation of finding aids will include development of controlled subject headings; additional research to properly represent the instruments, individuals, and foundries in the Biographical and Historical Note section; and the inputting of the information into the Access database.

Though CONTENTdm was selected, initial testing proved that its functionality for finding aids is rather limited at this point. Conversations with CONTENTdm representatives confirmed that an XML finding aid, once uploaded using the finding aid wizard, cannot be updated or altered later. The same is true of a PDF that has been uploaded as a “compound object.” This poses a significant problem because the ABCL collections are active



and will require regular updates. After additional experimentation and further conversations, it was determined that a PDF uploaded as a “single object” can be replaced. It was this discovery that prompted the development in the Access database for PDF export functionality. Uploading PDFs as a single object in CONTENTdm will allow regular updates while retaining the metadata and static URL for the item.

As processing continues, all finding aids will be contained in a single CONTENTdm collection, allowing them to be fully searchable. Once the finding aid collection is established, they will then be shared via OCLC’s Digital Collection Gateway onto WorldCat. This method should allow for future linking between finding aids and any digital items created that are referenced therein.

Looking Forward

With an eye to the future, the PI and PA have discussed other avenues and outlets for the information contained within the newly created finding aids to become available not only to the carillon-ner and academic communities but also to the general public. Some options being considered include seeking out a partner, such as the Florida Virtual School (home of the Florida Opening Archives program) or the University of Florida, to serve as an additional host for the finding aids, and the addition or creation of another type of web venue such as a wiki or blog. Attendance at regional meetings has revealed possible outlets including adding documented information

to Wikipedia through the University of Miami’s Remixing Archival Metadata Project.

The mission of this project is to bring a hidden collection to light, thereby increasing the global knowledge about carillons and drawing users into the other collections held at BTG. Bok Tower Gardens is committed to being a leader in carillon scholarship, and this is one giant step toward that goal. As more items are processed and brought to light, new research avenues can be discovered. Links between previously unknown facts and people can be made, and a new era of discovery can begin. The project will also help link carillon research to other subject interests such as engineering, general music scholarship, and art. Through flexibility in processing methodology and always keeping our end users in mind, planning and implementation of this project will assure that these materials can ring out to users for many generations to come.

References

The History of Medicine Finding Aids Consortium:

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/hmd/consortium/about.html>

Nemmers, John R. 2006. Best Practice Guidelines for the Implementation of EAD Version 2002 in Florida Institutions. Available at <http://fclaweb.fcla.edu/uploads/Priscilla%20Caplan/FloridaEADguidelines.pdf>.