

LIS 663: Metadata: Description and Access
Rick Block
Fall 2008
Assignment 4: DACS
student: Cedomir Kovacev
kovacev@earthlink.net

Finding Aid to The Albert Einstein Archives
(http://www.alberteinstein.info/finding_aid/)

**How their current practice looks based on the DACS multilevel rules:
At the highest level of description, are they producing something
close to a minimum, optimum, or added value finding aid?**

The Finding Aid to the Albert Einstein Archives in general meets the standard for Multilevel Added Value description. All minimum requirements for multilevel description are present. Identification of the whole-part elements is provided in the "System of Arrangement" section.

On the subsequent level the identification of the whole-part elements provides access to folder structure as well as access to individual items via "Selected Search Terms" section. This is also probably the main problem with this finding aid since the structure is hidden within the "Selected Search Terms" section. The name of the section is not intuitive enough, it actually covers more than its name implies. The expanded structure should be incorporated into "System of Arrangement" section.

In some instances (for example in "Multimedia products" or "Einstein Trivia" within the System of Arrangement section) names of Creators are obviously missing, but that most likely has to do with the vast volume of material. This can also be at least partly dealt with by incorporating the expanded folder structure from "Selected Search Terms" section into "System of Arrangement" section.

If not meeting the DACS minimum requirements, what elements of description would they need to add and at what levels to bring their finding aid up to the standard?

The Finding Aid to the Albert Einstein Archives does meet DACS minimum requirements.

**Where their current practices adhere to DACS rules
Focus on the elements for a minimum multilevel record (p. 10), but
analyze as well other elements you find they're using.**

The Reference Code element is present.
The Name and Location of Repository element (in this case "Location of the Collection") in the first two instances does not include the name of the town or country where the listed institution is located.

The collection includes mainly textual but also non-textual materials. The papers were arranged and described by Einstein's secretary Helen Dukas, but various materials of different nature were added to the collection in subsequent years. Given these facts the title could be changed to "The Albert Einstein Collection".

The date element is present and includes the bulk date.
The extent element includes approximate number of items as well as the physical extent of the materials.

A minor correction is needed in the Name of Creator element. It should state as follows:
Einstein, Albert, 1879-1955

The Scope and Content element is covered exhaustively and gives a good overall description of the materials. It emphasizes diverse nature of the collection – Einstein's scientific papers, lectures, correspondence, newspaper articles, sound and film recordings etc.

There is Conditions Governing Access and in addition Condition Governing Reproduction element which is understandable and necessary given the nature and importance of materials.

Language and Scripts of the Material element lists in detail all the languages of the material.

The Identification of whole-part relationship is provided within the System of Arrangement element. There are four main subsections that are related to different format of materials. They in turn are divided into series and sub-series according to record type. Internal organization as well as arrangement is described. The description of arrangement down to the folder level is accessible through “Selected Search Terms” element. It is not clear why collapsible menu with this information is not placed within System of Arrangement element.

Archival History should be renamed to “Custodial History”.

The “Immediate Source of Acquisition” element is present and lists the institutions involved in the transfer of materials.

Biographical History is provided in the form of “Einstein’s Biographical Timeline”. It is divided into four sections, giving an overview of Einstein’s life and work.

Publication Note contains important information about materials, related to the fact that most of them are original drafts.

On the sub-series level arrangement is described and description of the nature of materials is included. There is a reference to dates when materials were created and the names of creators if different from the one at the top level of description. The descriptions are petty detailed and give a strong hint at what these materials include.

The “Selected Search Terms” element provides access to folder level description. It includes box number, folder number, item title, range of items as well as corresponding date. Folder number is linked to the list to items with database info, call number, date, author, receiver, title and the digital format of the document.

1. Presence of elements: Does the finding aid, at the highest level, contain all the multilevel minimum “required” elements for the top level of description. If not, which are missing?

This Finding Aid contains all Multilevel Minimum required elements.

2. At the highest level of description in the finding aid, does the supplied title adhere to the rules for Title (2.3) in DACS? Are there segments missing? Is there too much information? What would you suggest as a more DACS-friendly title for the collection?

In order to comply with DACS the title should be changed to “The Albert Einstein Collection” as noted before.

3. At lower levels of description in the finding aid, are the supplied titles formulated based on what you know about titles in multilevel descriptions (think about what we did in Exercise 4 in class)? Are there segments missing? Is there too much information?

The titles of subsections, series and sub-series are succinct, concise and clear (Textual Materials, Audio-Visual Materials, The Albert Einstein Archives Library and Artifacts are the names of sub-sections for example). At the folder level the titles sometimes reflect the name of higher-level series, which can be confusing, but often a short additional specific designation is added.

4. Does the Scope and Content note in the finding aid contain the kinds of information that DACS says should be in this element (see “Purpose and Scope” in DACS 3.1 on page 35)? Is there extraneous information? Based on what you know about the 25 elements defined by DACS, is there information here that should be separated out and labeled distinctly as another DACS element?

The Scope and Content element in this finding aid outlines the main characteristics of the materials. It includes reference to subject matter of the materials. It mentions specific correspondence, which could be of particular interest and lists other types of non-

textual materials. The processes that generated the materials are described in the “Archival History” element. The content dates are referenced in the “System of Arrangement” element. The Scope and Content element in this case is well formed and serves its purpose well.

5. Based on what you know about DACS, what is the best thing this repository is currently doing in their finding aids?

Given the importance of materials their origin and custodial history are very important and this finding aid gives detailed information about that within “Archival History” element. Also, in my opinion descriptions on sub-collection and series level are both succinct and informative, giving enough preliminary information to researchers.

6. Based on what you know about DACS, what is the most important thing you would suggest they focus on improving in order to align their finding aids with DACS?

As noted before the main problem with this finding aid is of a structural nature. One of its main strengths is fairly easy access to folder and item level, but placing it within “Selected Search Terms” element obscures entry. This structure should be accessible through “System of Arrangement” element. “Selected Search Terms” should perform the role of “Access points” pointing to names and topics of a particular interest or significance.