Computer Generated Description as the Required Digital Competence in Archival Profession

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ABSTRACT

This article examines archival description generated by the archival management software for records creators in Croatia. Authors explain practices with finding aids in records creators and Croatian National Archives institutions. The authors outline the creation and linking of ISAD(G) and ISAAR (CPF) descriptions in the tool-supported practice. The automated creation of an inventory in a human-readable form of “classical” printable finding aid as well as in the EAD3 1.0 XML form is also explained in the article. In the end, considering the significance of finding aids for records and archival management abilities, as well as for information and knowledge sharing abilities of records creators and institutions with archival holdings, the authors propose a maturity model for those institutions based on automation and usability of their finding aids.

KEYWORDS

Archival Professionals, Computer Generated Archival Description, Digital Competence, XML

INTRODUCTION

Finding aids in Croatia are typically produced by archival institutions of Croatian National Archives (CNA) network – central institution and its branches. In general, instead of creating finding aids, Croatian creators produce lists that contain metadata about their holdings and export them in a form of XML files for the National Archival Information System (NAIS, http://arhinet.arhiv.hr/default.aspx). XML files are being prepared according to NAIS schemas. Croatian creators of archival records also have the opportunity to enter archival descriptions into NAIS directly.

According to the new proposed Act of archives and archival institutions (published by the Government in April 2017) the main typology of CNA archives’ finding aids

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is the following – public archival institutions in the CNA network and other public institutions founded and registered as archives produce registers related to accession, deposits, usage, finding aids related to all fonds and collections in institution’s repository and finding aids for their fonds and collections (per particular unit). According to existing legislation, branch CNA institutions also produce registers of creators under their authority, dossiers of fonds and collections (per particular unit), as well as registers related to restoration, allied materials and other additional registers. Central CNA produces several additional registries – according to new proposed archival legislation that would be the Registry of archival fonds and collections of the Republic of Croatia, archival institutions register, protected private archival holdings register, and register of creators under the supervision of CNA institutions. According to existing legislation, central CNA institution produces “Registry of archival fonds and collections of the Republic of Croatia”, register of private archival material creators, register of archival material declared as cultural heritage, register of archival material of state importance housed outside the state, and register of CNA institutions’ staff.

Details about finding aids types in Croatia for this period can be found in the ordinance “Regulations for documentation in the archives” (Official Gazette 90/2002 and 106/2007). Croatia is in a period of expected changes in the main Archives and archival institutions act, so changes related to subordinate ordinances and the practice with finding aids are expected. The Archives and archival institution act proposal was published in April 2017. This legislative process was paused because of political changes in the country, but it is expected to continue in the second half of the year. Related ordinances are expected to be produced in a period of one year after the act becomes operative.

Registers, i.e. finding aids created by CNA institutions and other institutions registered as archives, are exhaustively prescribed in the “Regulations for documentation in the archives” ordinance (Official Gazette 90/2002 and 106/2007) – according to the legislation that was still in force during the writing of this article. Besides prescribing registers, this ordinance systematically prescribes main archives’ inventories, dossiers of fonds/collections and the Registry of archival fonds and collections of the Republic of Croatia. However, for a production of finding aids related to particular fonds or collections, finding aids that elaborate archival material, like summary guides and summary and analytical inventories, archival professionals are just being roughly directed to do description according to the ISAD(G) standard (Regulations for documentation in the archives, article 22, OG 90/2002). Moreover, the “Regulation for documentation in the archives” ordinance is obligatory for institutions from CNA network and institutions enrolled in the register of Archival institutions, but not for creators of archival records under supervision of CNA. Consequently, finding aids with all the characteristics of author work and with relatively loose structure
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