

Standardising Description: The Experience of Using ISAD(G)

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INTRODUCTION

There is no getting away from first reviewing briefly the standards developed by the ICA Ad Hoc Commission on Descriptive Standards (ICA/DDS) so as to understand the reasons for their development and to explain, in context, the environment in which they were developed — where they came from and why they were seen to be necessary. Much of the *history of their development*, that is, the manner in which they were developed, may be found in the introductions to the three documents which were produced by the Ad Hoc Commission during its life span from 1990 to 1996.¹ The documents in question are:

1. *Statement of Principles Regarding Archival Description, First version Revised* / adopted by the Ad Hoc Commission on Descriptive Standards, Madrid, Spain, January 1992. — Ottawa : Feb. 1992.
2. *ISAD(G) : General International Standard Archival Description (Final ICA approved version)* / Adopted by the Ad Hoc Commission on Descriptive Standards, Stockholm, Sweden, 21-23 January 1993. — Ottawa : 1994. — ISBN 0-9696035-1-7.
3. *ISAAR(CPF) : International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons and Families, Final ICA approved version* / Prepared by the Ad Hoc Commission on Descriptive Standards, Paris, France, 15-20 November 1995. — Ottawa : 1994. — ISBN 0-9696035-3-3.

Although the emphasis, interest and publicity seem to have focussed on the *ISAD(G)*, it is good to point out that the Commission produced three documents, the last two of which are promoted as standards for our archival profession. The *ISAD(G)* and the *ISAAR(CPF)* are interrelated and they should be considered together in any discussion. Therefore, this paper will not be restricted to the *ISAD(G)* alone, but will include its cousin the *ISAAR(CPF)*.

The work of the ICA Ad Hoc Commission on Descriptive Standards had its origin in an Invitational Meeting of Experts on Descriptive Standards held in Ottawa, Canada, 4 - 7 October 1988. The meeting was hosted and sponsored by the National Archives of Canada in cooperation with the International Council on Archives.²

The need for standards for archival description was felt to arise from automation. In the 1980s, as a result of automation studies and systems design, and attempts at implementing such systems for description of archival holdings in major archival repositories, particularly in Canada and the United States, a general lack of consistency in archival descriptive practices was revealed. Automation demands consistency in

approach and procedures in the functions to be automated. Archivists had not paid much attention to this requirement for large scale automation projects. This, in contrast to small scale automation projects, such as those implemented by individual archivists on stand alone microcomputers, using off-the-shelf software, such as word processors, database management software e.g., dBASE. Such efforts only needed consistency of approach for the single, small, stand alone projects run on these microcomputers. Examples of such projects are the making of inventories, lists, or stand alone and unique finding aids, the end product of these being almost always a conventional paper product (print-out).

Another issue which was mentioned relating to the need of standards was the exchange of archival descriptive information between repositories. Even though archival materials are considered to be unique, major copying projects, using microfilming and other copying techniques make for the existence of multiple copies of holdings in archival repositories. The scattering of archival fonds among multiple archives or among countries, etc. was also seen as a reason for standardising descriptive information so as to make re-describing material belonging to the same fonds, or copies of these, no longer necessary and to enable collocation, i.e., the bringing together, of parts of fonds of the same provenance possible in union listings or finding aids, such as institutional, regional or national finding aids. This latter issue is becoming more relevant and pressing when archival repositories are making their holdings accessible on-line on the Internet in the form of descriptions representing those holdings.

Mention was also made of the archives of former colonies located in repositories of their former colonizers. Such archives have been extensively copied by the repositories of the colonized country or by cooperative projects between the two or other interested parties. The descriptive information of the copied material should not have to be redone. It should be made possible to exchange the information or transfer the descriptions in a standardized form with the copied material.

A number of papers presented at the meeting dealt with what the state of affairs regarding archival descriptive standardisation efforts were in the various countries from which speakers came. It became clear that such efforts were at most at the very beginning stages of development or not developed at all. To those who were there, it also became painfully evident that some of the delegates were neither sure what the meeting was about nor cognizant of the problem and, therefore, of the need for standards of archival description.

Nevertheless, the meeting came to an unanimous conclusion that there was a need for international archival descriptive standards and passed a resolution asking the ICA to establish a working group. This working group became the ICA Ad Hoc Commission on Descriptive Standards (ICA/DDS).³

OVERVIEW OF, AND INTRODUCTION TO THE THREE ICA DOCUMENTS PRODUCED BY ITS AD HOC COMMISSION ON DESCRIPTIVE STANDARDS, 1990 - 1996

The Statement of Principles

With the general lack of understanding of what archival descriptive standards were all about and what was to be standardised, as revealed by the Ottawa Meeting of Experts, the second part of resolution 2 of that meeting fortunately gave some guidance. It asked

that the working group "... prepare draft standards and rules for the description of archives at the fonds/group/collection level for the consideration of the international community." It did not explicitly mention that these standards were to standardise finding aids. The guidance was still vague. The consultative group which met on Unesco's request in Paris in December of 1989 therefore decided that it would be advisable to first develop a statement of principles regarding archival description before attempting to standardise it. The group also was asked to develop a work plan. On the basis of the two documents, Unesco was prepared to fund the project, which it subsequently did over the entire life of the Ad Hoc Commission.

The *Statement of Principles Regarding Archival Description* was the result of the effort. It was the first document developed by the Ad Hoc Commission. It is, consequently, a very important document because it sets out the basic thinking behind the two standards which were subsequently developed, the *ISAD(G)* and the *ISAAR(CPF)*. It also set the pattern for the development process of the standards such as the procedure for obtaining the input from the international professional archival community.

A basic unwritten principle which was unanimously adopted by the members of the Ad Hoc Commission is that standards of this kind are developed by the profession, i.e., by professional archivists for consideration of use by archival institutions. For this reason, members on the Commission were selected for their expertise and not, as a first criterium, as representatives from their institutional constituencies or, indeed, from any particular country or region. In this, the Ad Hoc Commission was different from other ICA bodies.

In recognition of this principle, the Commission solicited input from the international professional archival community. After agreement on a draft, the Commission sent it out to all "B" members of the ICA, which are the various organizations which represent professional archivists. The draft was accompanied by a request to disseminate the document and an invitation to comment on the draft. The Commission determined that a deadline of half a year to obtain comments was both appropriate and sufficient. Comments received were compiled and taken into consideration in finishing a final document. With this rather generous time frame for comments, it is assumed that the standards which were developed carry a consensus for adoption or, at least, a tentative try-out on a national level.

Important assumptions made by the *Statement* and which must be kept in mind when examining the *ISAD(G)* and the *ISAAR(CPF)* are stated in the preface of the *Statement*:

P.5 The Commission recognizes

- that elements of information about archival material are required at each stage of its management (e.g., accessioning, conservation, arrangement) [*that is, during the entire life cycle of the documents*] if the material is to be on the one hand securely preserved and controlled by the custodian, and on the other hand made accessible at the proper time to all who have a right to consult it;
- that 'archival description' in the widest sense of the term covers every element of information no matter at what stage of management it is identified or established;
- that at every stage the information remains dynamic and may be subject to amendment in the light of further knowledge of the archival material or its provenance; and
- that computerized information systems in particular may serve to integrate or select elements of information as required, and to update or amend them.

P.6 But the Commission has focused its attention on one particular aspect of archival description for the purposes of these *Principles*, namely the description which serves, as far as possible, as the definitive representation of the archival material and which is required to establish intellectual control over it and promote access to the information which it contains. This means that the Commission has taken its stand at a point *after* the archival material has been selected for permanent preservation and arranged. As a result, for the purposes of these *Principles*, a narrower definition of 'archival description' has been adopted as explained in the Glossary of Terms.

P.7 This does not imply that standards may not be applied to information captured at other stages of management of archival material. On the contrary, it is expected that such standards will be developed, and that standards developed based on these *Principles* will be an integral part of the larger universe of standards affecting information about archives.

P.8 The Commission further recognizes

- that, especially in view of the increasing complexity of administrative structures, an explanation of the context in which the material was created is an important aspect of archival description; and
- that, also in view of this complexity, it may sometimes be necessary for the archivist to regard the fonds as an intellectual rather than a physical concept.

P.9 The Commission nevertheless considers the concept of the fonds to be both helpful and necessary. The Commission encourages national initiatives to determine how in practice the concept may best be applied.

The second most important statement is in the definitions of the terms used. The definitions obtain the assumptions the Commission made and in the context of which the standards were formulated and ought to be read. In particular, it is important to discern what the Commission adopted as its definition of archival description which it defined in the glossary as:

Archival Description.

Creation of an accurate representation of the fonds and its component parts by the process of capturing, collating, analysing, and organizing any information that serves to identify archival material and explain the context and records systems which produced it.

This definition uses the word *fonds*, which the *Statement* defines as:

Fonds.

All of the documents, regardless of form or medium, naturally generated and/or accumulated and used by a particular person, family, or corporate body in the conduct of personal or corporate activity.

Also, the distinction which is made between description and access points is something new to archives and archivists, at least in the usage of the terminology associated with the concept. See the definition of archival description above and the definition of an access point which it defines as:

Access point.

A name, term, etc. by which a description may be searched, identified and retrieved.

Assumed here is that access points are under **authority control**. The meaning of this term is discussed under *ISAAR(CPF)* section of this presentation.

The *Statement of Principles* was adopted by the General Council of ICA at its meeting in Montreal during the XIIth International Congress on Archives in 1992. The procedure of submitting the *Statement* to the ICA Council for formal adoption by means of a resolution was followed because it is a statement of principles and not a standard itself. Subsequent standards which were developed by the Commission did not go through this formal procedure because developing them was in the mandate and charge to the Commission. It may be noted that the title pages of the *ISAD(G)* and the *ISAAR(CPF)* carry a statement that the document was "...adopted by the Commission...".

The development of the first description standard, the *ISAD(G)*, was based on the assumptions made in the *Statement*.

ISAD(G) : General International Standard Archival Description

The Commission followed the same process in developing the *ISAD(G)* as it did for the *Statement of Principles*. The introduction of the *ISAD(G)* states its purpose consisely as follows:

- 1.1 This set of general rules for archival description is part of a process that will
- ensure the creation of consistent, appropriate, and self explanatory descriptions;
 - facilitate the retrieval and exchange of information about archival material;
 - enable the sharing of authority data; and
 - make possible the integration of descriptions from different repositories into a unified information system.

- 1.2As **general** rules, these are intended to be broadly applicable to descriptions of archives regardless of the nature or extent of the unit of description. The rules guide the formulation of information in each of twenty-six (26) elements that may be combined to constitute the description of an archival entity.

This latter point tries to acknowledge and emphasize that *all* archival description is fundamentally description of collectivities of material and that these collectivities may be organized in sub- collectivities which may be further subdivided, etc. Such organization is called arrangement (in English) *classement* (in French) and it is done on the basis of the principles of provenance and original order. Each collectivity or unit of arrangement becomes a unit of description. Thus, there may be many 'units of description' in a collectivity of archival material. These units of description, being divisions and subdivisions of the whole collectivity called a fonds, naturally have a hierarchical structure, and group themselves into hierarchical levels that have as a common characteristic the structure of a tree.

Before it enumerates and gives rules of each of the 26 elements of description that may be combined to constitute an archival description, the *ISAD(G)* first sets out rules for the units of description of these levels which it calls multilevel description and

hence, multilevel description rules. These are fundamental because these rules set up the *structure* of an archival description as illustrated in the appendix which is like a tree. This schema is the same as in the appendix of the *Statement of Principles*. (See figure 1.)

APPENDIX

A1 The model shows some typical situations and does not include all possible combinations of levels.

A2 Any number of intermediate levels are possible between any shown in the model.

MODEL OF THE LEVELS OF ARRANGEMENT OF A FONDS

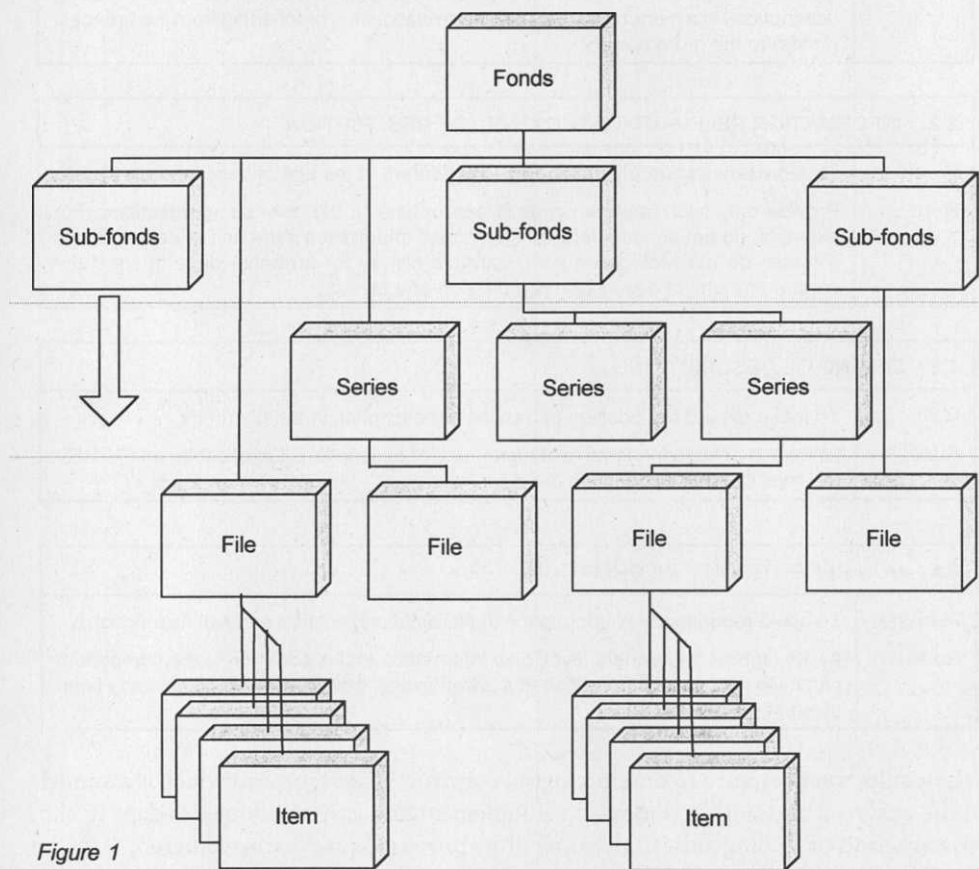


Figure 1

The rules of multilevel description do not prescribe a fixed set of levels in the hierarchy, nor compels one to describe all levels even if they do occur in particular cases. Thus, one may add or subtract levels as each case demands. The appendix shows one possible occurrence as an example. Between the dotted lines in the schema it tries to indicate the most commonly occurring levels (most typical situations), even though there may be sub-levels at any level but the lowest. The names given to each level, i.e., series, files, items, are not necessarily current in different archival traditions. The labels in the schema are examples and may be valid only for the English language.

The *ISAD(G)* enumerates the fundamental principles of multilevel description as follows:

2.1 DESCRIPTION FROM THE GENERAL TO THE SPECIFIC	
PURPOSE	To represent the context and the hierarchical structure of the fonds and its parts
RULE	At the fonds level give information for the fonds as a whole. At the next and subsequent levels give information for the parts being described. Present the resulting descriptions in a hierarchical part-to-whole relationship proceeding from the broadest (fonds) to the more specific.
2.2 INFORMATION RELEVANT TO THE LEVEL OF DESCRIPTION	
PURPOSE	To represent accurately the context and content of the unit of description.
RULE	Provide only such information as is appropriate to the level being described. For example, do not provide detailed file content information if the unit of description is a fonds; do not provide an administrative history for an entire department if the creator of a unit of description is a division or a branch.
2.3 LINKING OF DESCRIPTIONS	
PURPOSE	To make explicit the position of the unit of description in the hierarchy.
RULE	Link each description to its next higher unit of description, if applicable, and identify the level of description. (See 3.1.4.)
2.4 NON-REPETITION OF INFORMATION	
PURPOSE	To avoid redundancy of information in hierarchically related archival descriptions.
RULE	At the highest appropriate level, give information that is common to the component parts. Do not repeat information at a lower level of description that has already been given at a higher level.

These rules were designed to obtain a logical construct of descriptions which is assumed to be universal and both economical to implement and easy to adopt or adapt in the construction of finding aids. Only some of its provisions are discussed here.

The *ISAD(G)* elaborates the concept of *Unit of description* from that given in the *Statement of Principles*. Where the *Statement* gives the general definition "Any archival entity being described", the *ISAD(G)* further refines this to mean "A document or set of documents in any physical form, treated as an entity, and as such, forming the basis of a single description". The boxes in the appendix represent units of arrangement

which become the object of description. Thus each unit of arrangement is designated and becomes a unit of description. A description may therefore be made for a fonds as a whole and any of its parts, such as a series, sub-series, file or item.

The multilevel rules specify in 2.3 that the descriptions must be linked so that their relative relationship in the organizational structure of the fonds is made clear by lay-out or display (e.g., in a finding aid, on a computer screen or on the Internet). It is also clear that the rule which specifies not to repeat information already given at a higher level (rule 2.4) makes the lower level descriptions *dependent* on the higher level ones. This too has consequences on the display if it is to be a contextual display. It means that any description from a lower level must be displayed with its higher level descriptions to make sense. Such displays are not very difficult to design for a finding aid, but much more difficult on a computer screen based on information in a database. The Internet World Wide Web HTML displays, where links can be made because the display is a hypertext file, are ideally suited for such purposes. Parts of the description can be linked to its parents and/or child descriptions.

The *ISAD(G)* then sets out all the elements of description, one by one, and gives a purpose and a rule for each. It does this as described in its introduction I.4:

I.4 The organization of the rules reflects a preferred structure for any given description incorporating elements governed by the rules. Within this structure the elements are grouped in six information areas:

1. Identity Statement Area
(where essential information is conveyed to identify the unit of description)
2. Context Area
(where information is conveyed about the origin and custody of the unit of description)
3. Content and Structure Area
(where information is conveyed about the subject matter and arrangement of the unit of description)
4. Condition of Access and Use Area
(where information is conveyed about the availability of the unit of description)
5. Allied Materials Area
(where information is conveyed about materials having an important relationship to the unit of description)
6. Note Area
(where specialized information and information that cannot be accommodated in any of the other areas may be conveyed).

It also points out that, of all the 26 elements, it considers a few as essential for international exchange. These are:

- a. reference code;
- b. title;
- c. date(s) of creation or date(s) of accumulation of the material in the unit of description;
- d. extent of the unit of description; and
- e. level of description.

If the name of the creator is not included in the title, then the element of description that contains that name is also essential for international exchange.

This latter statement is important as it is a clue to how essential the ICA/DDS considered the name of the creator to be. It is the link to the next standard the ICA/DDS developed, the *ISAAR(CPF)*.

As a result of the work on the *ISAD(G)* and the comments received on the draft, the commission realized that it had only half a standard. The *ISAD(G)* is a standard description for the archival records or documents. Many of the comments pointed out that archival description is the sum total of description of the documents and the creators of those documents. The *ISAD(G)* did not adequately cover the latter. Thus, the commission decided to take on as its next project a standard description for creators of archival fonds and, at the same time, tackle the as yet unfamiliar topic for archivists of authority control for the names of those creators.

The *ISAAR(CPF): International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons and Families* is the result of that effort. Over the course of two further plenaries, again supported by another bi-annual grant from Unesco, the *ISAAR(CPF)* was developed, comments solicited and approved for publication in 1996 at its last meeting in Paris in November 1995.

ISAAR(CPF): International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons and Families

The *ISAAR(CPF)* is a companion standard to the *ISAD(G)*. If used, it should be in conjunction with the *ISAD(G)*. It may also be used as a stand alone standard, but it was not meant to be used in this manner, nor designed by the Commission with that purpose in mind.

The difference between the two standards *ISAD(G)* and *ISAAR(CPF)* is that the first captures information about the records (describes the archival materials) and the latter captures information about the creators of those records (describes the persons, corporate bodies and families that created records). The *ISAAR(CPF)* calls this *contextual information*. Archivists have always seen the need, indeed the necessity, to capture contextual information because the records of which they are the custodians are primary source records. Such records cannot be understood very well without knowing the context of their creation: who created the records, what kinds of functions (businesses, roles and responsibilities of government, church or private corporate entities) caused these records to be created, their associated activities, the administrative and documentary processes, etc. Unlike *works*, such as books, archival records are not self documenting. Thus, the *ISAAR(CPF)* tries to identify elements of description which capture this sort of information.

The contextual information needs to be attached to the creator entity in some fashion. The *ISAAR(CPF)*'s main anchor is the name of the creator in a standardized form. The *ISAAR(CPF)* calls the name of the creator in a standardized form, or a suitable standardized substitute for that name, an authoritative name or *authority entry*. All of the information that is captured for the creator entity in the elements outlined in the *ISAAR(CPF)* and including the authority entry, is called the *authority record* for that creator entity. You may well ask why do we need authority entries? That question is not so easily answered because it really falls outside the scope of this presentation or outside the scope of the *ISAAR(CPF)*. The short answer, and the indirect answer given by the *ISAAR(CPF)*, is that it is needed when you wish to use these names as access points. The *ISAAR(CPF)* defines an *access point* as:

Access point. A name, keyword, index term, etc. by which a description may be searched, identified or retrieved.

How one creates an authoritative name or authority entry, is left to national or institutional conventions or rules. It is obvious that the *ISAAR(CPF)* cannot possibly handle or give instructions on all the different ways archival institutions or national conventions create indexes. Indexing is a science. One of my staff attended a week long course on indexing a couple of weeks ago given by the Université de Québec à Montréal. Instead, the *ISAAR(CPF)* instructs to record the rules or conventions which are used to create the authority entry in 3.2. The national rule book we use in Canada, *Rules for Archival Description (RAD)*⁴ devotes about half of its entire contents to rules for the creation of such authority entries or access points. The better indexes capture also variant forms of the name, and related names and links them by means of *see* and *see also* references. The *ISAAR(CPF)* instructs to capture this information also, in 1.5 and 1.6 respectively.

The general lay-out of the *ISAAR(CPF)* reflects the organization of the information needed for both capturing the authority entry portion and the contextual information. This information is followed by notes which document the information given in the record. Thus the authority record is made up of three main areas of information as follows:

1. AUTHORITY CONTROL AREA
 - 1.1 Identity Code
 - 1.2 Type of Archival Authority Record
 - 1.3 Authority Entry
 - 1.4 Parallel Entry/Entries
 - 1.5 Non-preferred Term(s)
 - 1.6 Related Authority Entry/Entries
2. INFORMATION AREA
 - 2.1 Corporate Bodies
 - 2.2 Persons
 - 2.3 Families
3. NOTE AREA
 - 3.1 Archivist's Note
 - 3.2 Rules or Conventions
 - 3.3 Date

The AUTHORITY CONTROL AREA contains the elements of description which record authoritative access point information, including any references from and to other names or the same name in different forms; the INFORMATION AREA contains the elements of description which capture the contextual information about the creator; and the NOTE AREA contains the elements which capture documentary information which the creator of the authority record must supply so that the information in the record may be authenticated and verified.

Finally a few words about how the *ISAAR(CPF)* may be used. The introduction has a section which outlines the use quite clearly (paragraphs I.16 to I.20). Note that without rules or conventions, one cannot use the *ISAAR(CPF)* because there would be no anchor to which one can attach the contextual information (I.20). Thus, the authority entry itself (1.3) and the rules and/or conventions used to create the entry in 1.3 must be recorded in 3.2 as a minimum requirement for the use of the *ISAAR(CPF)*.

By means of examples, particularly those in 3.2, the *ISAAR(CPF)* tries to encourage the undertaking of the development of conventions and/or rules on a national or regional or intra national basis rather than an institutional one. Institutional rules are not considered standards in the conventional sense of that word. Note that there are no examples in 3.2 of rules which are institutional.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ISAD(G) AND THE ISAAR(CPF)

In view of the difficulty of implementing the *ISAAR(CPF)* without national standards for the recording of authority entries, a discussion of the relationship between *ISAD(G)* and *ISAAR(CPF)* illustrated with examples would be impossible. The examples would have to be drawn from an existing national standard. It cannot be detached from it. These relationships are important, and from the experience of the ICA/DDS, gained in the development of the *ISAAR(CPF)* and the comments received, it appears that the concept of authority control and associated work is new to archives and archivists.

Therefore, for the purpose of this discussion, and for reasons of familiarity by the author, the Canadian existing national standard for description of archival materials, *Rules for Archival Description* or RAD for short, was selected to illustrate the relationships between *ISAD(G)* and *ISAAR(CPF)*. RAD is mostly *ISAD(G)* and *ISAAR(CPF)* compliant. Further, an integrated set of examples from a RAD compliant finding aid was selected for illustration purposes. The examples are from *A Record of Service: A Guide to Holdings of the Central Archives of The United Church of Canada* / Project coordinator Ruth Dyck Wilson with Peter D. James. - Toronto: United Church of Canada, Victoria University Archives, 1992. - Occasional Paper Number One. The following descriptions and associated authority records are extracted from the finding aid:

EXAMPLES USED IN DIAGRAM AS FOUND IN FINDING AID BUT SLIGHTLY MODIFIED FOR THE PURPOSE OF ISAD(G) AND ISAAR(CPF) ILLUSTRATION⁵

Descriptive records

Methodist Church (Canada). Missionary Society

14: Methodist Church (Canada) Missionary Society fonds. — [ca. 1851-ca. 1930], predominant 1884-1925. — 15.34 m.

The Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church Canada Conference, Methodist Church in Canada was established in 1824. When this Church joined with the British Wesleyans to establish the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada in 1833, the Society evolved into an Auxiliary of the Wesleyan Missionary Society (Great Britain) to support the growth of domestic missions, including missions to Aboriginal People. This union was ended in 1840, but resumed in 1847. In 1854 the British Hudson's Bay Territory missions were transferred to the Missionary Society in Canada, which gradually took over the responsibility of all mission work from Britain beginning in Central Canada and the Northwest. The Society, with some changes in administrative structure, existed as part of the Methodist Church of Canada and the Methodist Church (Canada). The object of the Society came to be the support and enlargement of the aboriginal, French, domestic, foreign and other missions, carried on under the direction of the central committee and board, and later also under the Conferences. In 1906, the missions were divided between two new Departments -- Foreign and Home.

Fonds consists of the following series: General Board of Missions, 1865-1925; correspondence of the General Secretaries, 1868-1923; foreign mission records, 1888-1950; home mission records, 1906-1927; financial records, 1899-1930; quarterly returns of aboriginal institutes and day schools, 1902-1923; printed ephemera; and constitution and financial records of the Superannuation Fund for Lay Missionaries of Foreign Fields, 1919-1929.

Finding aid: See series descriptions.

See also United Church of Canada Board of Overseas Missions fonds (502) for records of missions continued by the United Church after the 1925 Union.

Location Number: See series descriptions.-

I. Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada. Missionary Society. II. Methodist Church of Canada. Missionary Society.

14/3: Records re foreign missions. — 1888-1950, predominant 1888-1925.— 4 m.

Series consists of records re the following missions: West China, 1891-1931; West China Union University, 1896-1950; and Japan, 1873-1925.

Finding aid: See subseries descriptions.

Location Number: 78.084C, 78.096C-78.098C.

14/3/1: West China Mission collection . — 1891-1931, predominant 1891-1925. — 2.2 m.
The Canadian Methodist Mission in West China was established in 1891.

Subseries consists of correspondence of the General Secretaries of the Methodist Church (Canada) Missionary Society; copybook of W.J. Mortimore; minutes of the West China Mission Council; reports, financial records, property registers, manuscripts of historical and biographical studies, and other material relating to the evangelistic, pastoral, educational and medical work of the West China Mission.

Finding aid: 19.

Location Number: 78.096C.

I. Canadian Methodist Mission of West China. Mission Council.

14/3/1/1: Canadian Methodist Mission Property Register, West China. — 1899 -1923. — 1 cm.

File consists of Canadian Methodist Mission Property Register pages, West China for Chengtu College University and Chengtu City.

14/3/1/1/1: Chengtu, College University, No. 1, University Site, East of Administration Building skirting east and west road to Silk School with some breaks, 1914 : [Land deed]. — 1922 . — 1 p.

"Date of purchase 1914"

"Date of Registration...Oct.1922"

NOTE: Even though the finding aid from which the fonds to sub-series examples were copied has (topical) subject added entries, these have been left off in the example.

Associated authority records

Canadian Methodist Mission of West China. Mission Council

The Methodist Church (Canada) sent its first missionaries to China in 1891; the council held its first meeting ca. 1896. It was dissolved with the establishment of the United Church of Canada in 1925.

See from Methodist Church (Canada). West China Mission Council Methodist Church (Canada). Missionary Society. West China Mission Council

Methodist Church (Canada). Missionary Society

Name changed in 1884 from the Methodist Church of Canada. Missionary Society. Dis-solved in 1925 with the establishment of The United Church of Canada.

See also/see also from Methodist Church of Canada. Missionary Society.

Source: Missionary Society Annual Reports, 1875-1925.

Methodist Church (Canada). Missionary Society. West China Mission Council

See **Canadian Methodist Mission of West China. Mission Council**

Methodist Church (Canada). West China Mission Council

See **Canadian Methodist Mission of West China. Mission Council**

Methodist Church of Canada. Missionary Society

Name changed in 1874 from the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada. Missionary Soci-ety.

Name changed in 1884 to Methodist Church (Canada) Missionary Society.

See also/see also from Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada. Missionary Society. Meth-odist Church (Canada) Missionary Society.

Source: Missionary Society Annual Reports, 1874-1875.

Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada. Missionary Society

Name changed in 1833 from the Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada (1828-1833). Missionary Society.

Name changed in 1874 to Methodist Church of Canada. Missionary Society.

See also/see also from Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada (1828-1833). Missionary Society. Methodist Church of Canada. Missionary Society.

Like the display in the finding aid from which these examples were extracted, the above display of descriptive records attempts to show the part to whole hierarchy by indentation as well as by the numbering scheme given to the levels of description and the parts of the fonds. Each level of description is indented one unit of indentation from its immediate parent. Thus, if there were more than one series description, it would be at the same indentation as the series description shown.

The numbering scheme, fonds numbers, series numbers, sub-series numbers, etc., also show the hierarchy. The fonds example here is fonds number 14. The series in this fonds are numbered 14/1, 14/2, 14/3, etc. The sub-series are a further division of this number, e.g., 14/1/1, 14/3/2, meaning sub-series 1 of series 1 of fonds 14; sub-series 2 of series 3 of fonds 14, etc. This numbering subdivision continues to the lowest level of description given in the example, the item level description.

The National Archives of Canada has decided to distinguish between a primary access point, being the access point for the creator of the fonds as it appears in the title of the fonds, and additional access points (additional to the primary one), which may be additional creators (for example, earlier or predecessor bodies, members of a family of a family fonds). This distinction is a refinement of the rules for choice of access points in the *Canadian Rules for Archival Description* which do not distinguish between a primary access point and additional access points. The example shows the primary access point as the authority entry in bold preceding the title of the fonds. The additional access points, in their authority entry form, are recorded in a *tracing*, which is a record of such additional access points appearing at the end for each description for which they are made. Descriptions which do not carry additional access points do not have a tracing. There is only one primary access point for a fonds and, therefore, for all its parts as described.

The associated authority records are, in this case, in an authority file. Each authority record carries the authority entry, as specified by the *ISAAR(CPF)* 1.3. The authority record is linked to those relevant descriptive records where they are needed as an access point. Thus, in a larger file of descriptive records, with descriptions of many fonds and their parts, an authority record may be linked to many descriptive records.

The next table shows the same set of examples labelled for each element of the description. The labels are the relevant *ISAD(G)* and *ISAAR(CPF)* elements.

MAPPING OF EXAMPLES TO ISAD(G) AND ISAAR(CPF) AREAS AND ELEMENTS OF DESCRIPTION

Descriptive record(s)

Level of Description	ISAD(G) and/or ISAAR(CPF) area or element	Contents of description
1. [Fonds]	ISAAR(CPF) 1.3 Authority entry (=primary access point); also representing ISAD(G) 3.2.1 Name of creator.	Methodist Church (Canada). Missionary Society
	ISAD(G) 3.1.2 Title	14: Methodist Church (Canada) Missionary Society fonds . —
	ISAD(G) 3.1.3 Dates of creation. — ISAD(G) 3.1.5 Extent...	[ca. 1851-ca. 1930], predominant 1884-1925. — 15.34 m.
	ISAD(G) 3.2.2 Administrative history. Also, ISAAR(CPF) 2.1 Information Area, Corporate body	The Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church Canada Conference, Methodist Church in Canada was established in 1824. When this Church joined with the British Wesleyans to establish the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada in 1833, the Society evolved into an Auxiliary of the Wesleyan Missionary Society (Great Britain) to support the growth of domestic missions, including missions to Aboriginal People. This union was ended in 1840, but resumed in 1847. In 1854 the British Hudson's Bay Territory missions were transferred to the Missionary Society in Canada, which gradually took over the responsibility of all mission work from Britain beginning in Central Canada and the Northwest. The Society, with some changes in administrative structure, existed as part of the Methodist Church of Canada and the Methodist Church (Canada). The object of the Society came to be the support and enlargement of the aboriginal, French, domestic, foreign and other missions, carried on under the direction of the central committee and board, and later also under the Conferences. In 1906, the missions were divided between two new Departments -- Foreign and Home.

<i>Level of Description</i>	<i>ISAD(G) and/or ISAAR(CPF) area or element</i>	<i>Contents of description</i>
	ISAD(G) 3.1.4 Level of description and 3.3.1 Scope and content / Abstract	Fonds consists of the following series: General Board of Missions, 1865-1925; correspondence of the General Secretaries, 1868-1923; foreign mission records, 1888-1950; home mission records, 1906-1927; financial records, 1899-1930; quarterly returns of aboriginal institutes and day schools, 1902-1923; printed ephemera; and constitution and financial records of the Superannuation Fund for Lay Missionaries of Foreign Fields, 1919-1929.
	ISAD(G) 3.4.6 Finding aids	Finding aid: See series descriptions.
	ISAD(G) 3.5.3 Related units of description	See also United Church of Canada Board of Overseas Missions fonds (502) for records of missions continued by the United Church after the 1925 Union.
	ISAD(G) 3.6.1 Note [unique to repository]	Location Number: See series descriptions.
	ISAAR(CPF) 1.6 Related authority entries (= additional access points)	I. Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada. Missionary Society. II. Methodist Church of Canada. Missionary Society.
2. [Series]	ISAD(G) 3.1.2 Title	14/3: Records re foreign missions. —
	ISAD(G) 3.1.3 Dates of creation. — ISAD(G) 3.1.5 Extent...	1888-1950, predominant 1888-1925. — 4 m.
	ISAD(G) 3.1.4 Level of description and 3.3.1 Scope and content / Abstract	Series consists of records re the following missions: West China, 1891-1931; West China Union University, 1896-1950; and Japan, 1873-1925.
	ISAD(G) 3.4.6 Finding aids	Finding aid: See subseries descriptions.
	ISAD(G) 3.6.1 Note [unique to repository]	Location Number: 78.084C, 78.096C-78.098C.
3. [Subseries]	ISAD(G) 3.1.2 Title	14/3/1: West China Mission collection : . —
	ISAD(G) 3.1.3 Dates of creation. — ISAD(G) 3.1.5 Extent...	1891-1931, predominant 1891-1925. — 2.2 m.
	ISAD(G) 3.2.2 Administrative history. Also, ISAAR(CPF) 2.1 Information Area, Corporate body	The Canadian Methodist Mission in West China was established in 1891.

<i>Level of Description</i>	<i>ISAD(G) and/or ISAAR(CPF) area or element</i>	<i>Contents of description</i>
	ISAD(G) 3.1.4 Level of description and 3.3.1 Scope and content / Abstract	Subseries consists of correspondence of the General Secretaries of the Methodist Church (Canada) Missionary Society; copybook of W.J. Mortimore; minutes of the West China Mission Council; reports, financial records, property registers, manuscripts of historical and biographical studies, and other material relating to the evangelistic, pastoral, educational and medical work of the West China Mission.
	ISAD(G) 3.4.6 Finding aids	Finding aid: 19.
	ISAD(G) 3.6.1 Note [unique to repository]	Location Number: 78.096C.
	ISAAR(CPF) 1.6 Related authority entries (= additional access points)	I. Canadian Methodist Mission of West China. Mission Council.
4. [File]	ISAD(G) 3.1.2 Title	14/3/1/1: Canadian Methodist Mission Property Register, West China. —
	ISAD(G) 3.1.3 Dates of creation. — ISAD(G) 3.1.5 Extent...	1899 -1923. — 1 cm.
	ISAD(G) 3.1.4 Level of description and 3.3.1 Scope and content / Abstract	File consists of Canadian Methodist Mission Property Register pages, West China for Chengtu College University and Chengtu City.
5. [Item]	ISAD(G) 3.1.2 Title	14/3/1/1/1: Chengtu, College University, No. 1, University Site, East of Administration Building skirting east and west road to Silk School with some breaks, 1914 : [Land deed]. —
	ISAD(G) 3.1.3 Dates of creation. — ISAD(G) 3.1.5 Extent...	1922. — 1 p.
	ISAD(G) 3.6.1 Notes	"Date of purchase 1914" "Date of Registration...Oct.1922"

Associated Authority records

<i>ISAAR(CPF) area or element</i>	<i>Contents of description</i>
1.3 Authority entry	Canadian Methodist Mission of West China. Mission Council
2.1 Information Area, Corporate body	The Methodist Church (Canada) sent its first missionaries to China in 1891; the council held its first meeting ca. 1896. It was dissolved with the establishment of the United Church of Canada in 1925.

<i>ISAAR(CPF) area or element</i>	<i>Contents of description</i>
1.5 Non-preferred terms	Methodist Church (Canada). West China Mission Council Methodist Church (Canada). Missionary Society. West China Mission Council
1.3 Authority entry	Methodist Church (Canada). Missionary Society
2.1 Information Area, Corporate body	Name changed in 1884 from the Methodist Church of Canada. Missionary Society. Dissolved in 1925 with the establishment of The United Church of Canada.
1.6 Related authority entry	Methodist Church of Canada. Missionary Society.
3.1 Archivist's Note	Source: Missionary Society Annual Reports, 1875-1925.
1.3 Authority entry	Methodist Church of Canada. Missionary Society
2.1 Information Area, Corporate body	Name changed in 1874 from the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada. Missionary Society. Name changed in 1884 to Methodist Church (Canada) Missionary Society.
1.6 Related authority entries	Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada. Missionary Society. Methodist Church (Canada) Missionary Society.
3.1 Archivist's Note	Source: Missionary Society Annual Reports, 1874-1875.
1.3 Authority entry	Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada. Missionary Society
2.1 Information Area, Corporate body	Name changed in 1833 from the Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada (1828-1833). Missionary Society. Name changed in 1874 to Methodist Church of Canada. Missionary Society.
1.6 Related authority entries	Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada (1828-1833). Missionary Society. Methodist Church of Canada. Missionary Society.

All the elements of the authority records are associated with the *ISAAR(CPF)* whereas the elements of the descriptive records have both *ISAD(G)* and *ISAAR(CPF)* representations. The relationship between descriptive records and authority records are in those elements in the descriptive records which have *ISAAR(CPF)* elements identified, sometimes in addition to *ISAD(G)* elements. These elements form the links between the descriptive record and the authority record. These links are illustrated in the relationship diagram in *Figure 2*.

On the left side of this diagram (left of the dotted line) a conventional multilevel hierarchical box diagram appears like the ones that appear in both the *Statement of Principles* and the *ISAD(G)*. By means of shading, a single hierarchy, from fonds, though series, sub-series, file and item has been selected to illustrate its contents, representing five levels of description. The contents are the set of descriptions in the example. The descriptions appear linked to the boxes in "call-out labels". Thus, each box represents a description as shown, including the primary access point (shown in the fonds box) and the additional access points shown as a tracing in each description that has them.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN AUTHORITY AND DESCRIPTIVE RECORDS

Illustrated with an example

Standardized archival description(s) according to ISAD(G) or compatible national rules

Archival authority records according to ISAAR(CPF) or compatible national rules

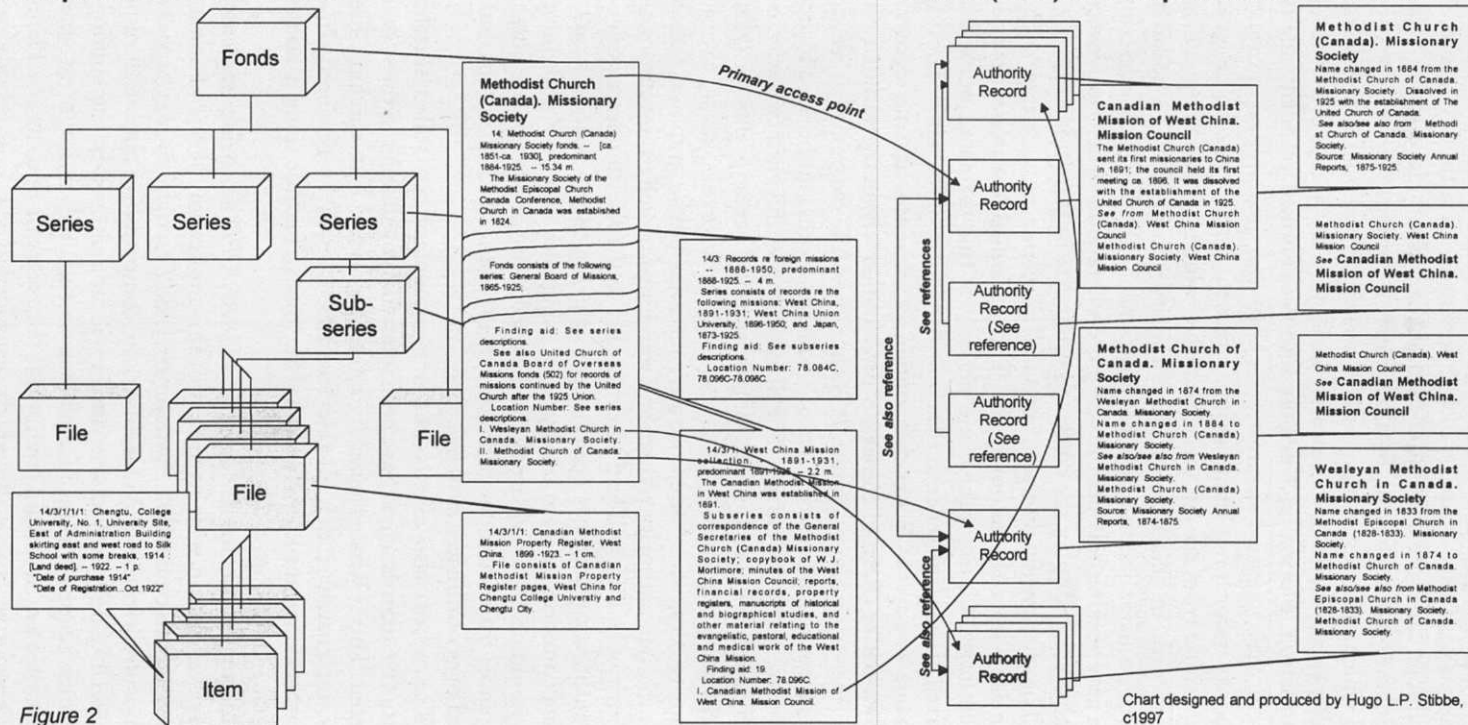


Figure 2

On the right hand side of the diagram (to the right of the dotted line) the authority file is shown with a set of boxes, each representing an authority record. Again, by means of call-out labels the content of each box is shown, representing an authority record. The contents of such an archival authority record may include the contextual information which in the examples in the above tables is shown in the descriptive records in smaller type, i.e., the administrative history or, in the case of persons, the biographical information. Normally, when an automated linked authority file is employed in a system, the contextual administrative history or biographical information is part of the authority record, not the descriptive record. Systems can be designed to pull in this information from the authority record to which it is linked upon display of a descriptive record. In this manner, an authority record may be updated, corrected and otherwise maintained without having to change anything in the descriptive record. This then may be done only once in one place whereupon all descriptive records that use this authority will display the corrected up to date information.

The relationship diagram shows that all references, such as *see* and *see also* references are made within the authority file. Thus, if someone searches on a name which is not the authorized form of the name, he/she will find the name, but will automatically be referred via a *see* reference to the authorized form of the name. The diagram shows this by a one way arrow. Boxes that contain *see* references have no arrows entering it, only arrows exiting. Related names are also handled within the authority file by a two way reference or *see also* reference. It is clear from the diagram that *see also* references are made from an authorized form of a name to another authorized form of a name. Both names are authority entries. The diagram shows this by a two way arrow.

Systems designed for searching on nominal access points for creators, such as the system being implemented at the National Archives of Canada, have automated linked authority files, where administrative histories and biographical sketches are linked to their relevant authority records and searching for such names automatically start in the authority file. Hits will lead automatically to the relevant descriptive records to which the authority record has been linked, bringing together, in this case, all descriptions with a common provenance. Systems using authority files with internal referencing, that is, indicating which are the authorized forms and which are not, and then making references from the non-authorized to the authorized form (vocabulary control) are called pre-coordinated systems.

The system also allows free non-vocabulary controlled searching on fields of descriptive records which have been indexed. Not all fields in the system are necessarily indexed. This is what is generally referred to as free text searching. Free text searching does not guarantee that all relevant material will be retrieved. In such a search a researcher does not know what he/she missed, because there is no way that a system can tell.

In conclusion, the *ISAD(G)* and *ISAAR(CPF)* are being implemented in Canada pretty well nation wide by means of the application of our national rules which are ICA standards compatible. *Rules for Archival Description = Règles pour la description des documents d'archives* (RAD/RDDA) are compatible in almost all respects to *ISAD(G)* and *ISAAR(CPF)*. Any discrepancies will be removed in the coming years by RAD revisions. These revisions take place in a structured environment where the Canadian Committee on Archival Description, the successor body to the Planning Committee on Descriptive Standards, which developed RAD, is the body which makes the

revisions. For a discussion on the history of the development of RAD and associated standards in Canada, see my article in *Archivaria*.⁶ The examples shown above, which are purposely not selected from the National Archives of Canada, are testimony to the universality of the application of RAD in Canada.

AFTERWORD

What is the future for the ICA standards for description? The ICA Ad Hoc Commission on Descriptive Standards was superseded by the Committee on Descriptive Standards (ICA/CDS) as a result of the recommendation made by the Ad Hoc Commission to the Beijing Congress. The task of the Committee is to maintain the existing standards and review them on a five-year cycle. The *ISAD(G)* is up for review in 1999 and the *ISAD(CPF)* in 2001. It is therefore incumbent upon its users to keep the ICA/CDS informed of experiences gained in trying to implement the standards and to provide input for revision.

The Committee also will no doubt explore whether new standards should be developed and whether structures for the implementation of standards should be set up. Among the latter, there is already some investigation taking place to examine the feasibility of introducing an International Standard Archival Authority Number (ISAAN) which would introduce control and global uniqueness to authority entries in the same manner as this is done by an the International Standard Book Number (ISBN) for book or book-like publications, the International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) for serial publications, etc. To this effect, contact was taken up with the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), our kindred NGO in the library world, during the Beijing Congress, where IFLA met in the week preceding the ICA congress.

Further, there have been requests to look at standards for finding aids. This topic is still under investigation and might be brought to the table at the first plenary meeting of the ICA/CDS which is likely to be called this year with Italy as the venue.

There also remains the on-going task of making the international archival community familiar with the developed standards and to teach them, give information in formal presentations, seminars, colloquiums and workshops and conferences. The members and past members of the ICA/CDS and its predecessor are a dedicated group and in most cases willing to volunteer their services.

For the next three years, the secretariat of the Committee will remain at the National Archives of Canada at the Office of Archival Standards. Communications regarding the standards, the sale of them as well as input for review, should be sent to the secretariat at the following address: Secretariat, ICA Committee on Descriptive Standards (ICA/CDS) c/o Office of Archival Standards, National Archives of Canada, 344 Wellington Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0N3, Canada *Attention:* Hugo L.P. Stibbe, Project Director Telephone: +1 613 996 7592; Fax: +1 613 995-2267; E-mail: hstibbe@archives.ca OR hstibbe@compuserve.com

NOTES

- 1 The Ad Hoc Commission was dissolved at the XIIIth International Congress on Archives in Beijing, China, in September 1996 in favour of a permanent committee which has now been approved by the ICA Executive and called the Committee on Descriptive Standards with the acronym ICA/CDS.
- 2 The proceedings of this meeting were published as *Toward International Descriptive Standards:: Papers presented at the ICA Invitational Meeting of Experts on Descriptive Standards, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa 4-7 October 1988* / Compiled and edited with the financial assistance of the Toronto Area Archivists Group Education Foundation = *Projet de normes internationales de description en archivistique : Communications présentées à la réunion restreinte d'experts en normes de description, Archives nationales du Canada, Ottawa, du 4 au 7 octobre 1988* / Recueil rassemblé et publié avec l'aide financière de la Toronto Area Archivists Group Education Foundation. — München ; New Providence ; London ; Paris : Saur, 1993. — ISBN 3-598-11163-0.
- 3 The resolutions relevant to the effort to create descriptive standards are quoted in the introduction of the *Statement of Principles*, in paragraph I.2.
- 4 *Rules for Archival Description* / Prepared under the direction of the Planning Committee on Descriptive Standards. — Ottawa : Bureau of Canadian Archivists, 1990. — ISBN 0-9690797-3-7.
- 5 The fonds to subseries examples are from fonds 14 appearing in the cited finding aid: *A Record of Service*. The file and subsequent level descriptions as well as the authority records have been kindly supplied by Ruth Dyck Wilson, the Project Coordinator of the finding aid.
- 6 Stibbe, Hugo L.P. "Archival Descriptive Standards and the Archival Community: A Retrospective, 1996". *Archivaria*, 41, Spring 1996, pp. 259-274.