The Usability of Electronic Finding Aids during Directed Searches

DLF Forum
April 21, 2004
New Orleans, Louisiana

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introduction

• archival chaos and “messiness”
• development of descriptive standards (incl. EAD)
• two issues largely unaddressed
  – user perception and use of finding aids
  – which designs facilitate effective search strategies?
goals, background, and scope

• focus: user interaction
• most user studies non-electronic
• studies of archival description not user centric
• study limited to directed searches
  – materials user strongly suspects might exist, where he/she has a search term in mind.
• also tests significance of domain and system expertise
methodology, slide 1

• focus on looking for collections, looking for folders
• website (ASP driven)
  – survey instrument for demographics, experience
  – 8 usability tasks → directed searches
    • collection-level interfaces
      – 11 option via links → University of North Carolina Mss Dept
      – 3 option, search, browse by subject or unit → UIUC
      – 2 options, search and alpha list → OAC
      – 1 option, alpha list → Princeton Public Policy Papers
    • folder-level interfaces
      – PDF → Northwestern
      – non-searchable EAD, left nav bar → TARO, U. Houston
      – HTML, top table on contents → Princeton
      – searchable EAD w/ two pop up windows → Yale
Task Number 1

The first task is a dry run to show you how the system works. In this task, like the others that follow, a webpage will be loaded in the top part of your screen. Using this webpage and any links or search tools you wish, find the PHONE NUMBER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS ARCHIVES

When you have found it, record the phone number in box located in the red bar at the bottom of your screen. Then click the 'Submit' button. If you cannot find the phone number, click the 'I give up' button.

You can redisplay these instructions at any time by clicking the INSTRUCTIONS button on the left side of the red bar.

When you have fully read the instructions, click the "next" button to proceed to the test.
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS ARCHIVES HOLDINGS

Search Instructions

This website provides a searchable interface for the University of Illinois Archives' control card system. Before beginning your search, please note that this database searches only summary records for the material in the archives, not the detailed box listings. It does not include holdings in the ALA Archives.

The database includes records for over 5,500 archives or manuscript collections. The materials have been arranged according to the archival principle of provenance, into a three-part classification scheme of record group, record sub-group, and record series.

The database may be queried using the navigation bar on the left side of the screen.

The basic search looks for a keyword found in the title and description fields in the database. An Advanced Search allows keyword searching of specific fields, limited by beginning or ending dates if desired. Keyword searches are most useful if you are looking for materials regarding a person, subject, or place regardless of the unit under which such materials are classified.

If you get too many hits when searching for a keyword, try "Browse by Subject." This feature allows for alphabetical browsing of the controlled subject terms which the Archives uses to describe the records we hold.

"Browse by Record Group" allows direct access to lists of archives or manuscripts sorted by record group and then by sub-group. This type of search is most useful if you would like to browse the records of a particular college, department, or unit.

The Record Series Number for the Lorado Taft Papers is: No. [Input field]  Submit | or | Give Up
Nikki Van Hightower Papers, 1967-1997

Descriptive Summary

Creator: Van Hightower, Nikki
Title: Nikki Van Hightower Papers
Dates: 1967-1997
Abstract: Nikki Van Hightower has been an outspoken activist in the women's movement and a leading proponent of equality for women in the city of Houston. Her papers include correspondence, memoranda, reports, studies, speeches, commentaries, press statements, publications, diaries, photographs and clippings.
Quantity: 14 boxes; 7.5 linear feet
Identification: uhvnh96
methodology, slide 2

- administered it both on and off-site
- during the test
  - system recorded answers and time spent search
  - observer recorded mouse movement, reactions
  - on site \(\rightarrow\) post test interviews
  - off site \(\rightarrow\) web form comments
- after the test
  - coded, queried and analyzed data
  - ran descriptive stats
  - t-tests (measures significance of two sets of paired means, an indication if differences likely to be replicated in population)
  - correlated times to survey results
  - transcribed interviews, examined submitted comments
results, sample characteristics

• respondents
  – 89 participants; 35 on-site, 54 off-site
  – On-site mostly students (77%), off site archivists librarians (51%)
  – 2/3 female
  – domain experts
    • 32% archivists
  – systems experts
    • 21% “power users” or better
  – interview comments show tensions over service expectations
Quantitative results, collection search

- tasks with fewest search options most successful
- alpha lists worked well
- Princeton design fastest, t-scores show significance
PUBLIC POLICY PAPERS

Collections marked with  have online finding aids; those marked with  have been recognized by the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference finding aid competitions.

A-B C-D E-F G-K L-M N-R S-U V-Z

The Mudd Manuscript Library gratefully acknowledges the generosity of the Independent College Fund of New Jersey for their assistance in making many of these finding aids available electronically.

A-B

Adams, Henry, Papers
American Association for the Advancement of the Humanities Archives
American Civil Liberties Union, 1917-1959
American Civil Liberties Union, 1950-1993
American Civil Liberties Union: Atlanta Office Records
American Civil Liberties Union: Washington, D.C. Office Records
American Committee for Devastated France, Records of the
Americans United for Separation of Church and State Archives
Armour, Norman, Papers
Armstrong, Hamilton Fish, Papers
The UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA at CHAPEL HILL

Manuscripts Department

ONLINE FINDING AIDS AND GUIDES

Search the Manuscripts Department Website (includes online finding aids and web pages with information about the Department and online exhibits)

Please note: Many Manuscripts Department finding aids and guides are not yet available online. Check with Manuscripts Department staff about access to collections not represented on this site.

Online Finding Aids:

- Southern Historical Collection and General and Literary Manuscripts (browseable alphabetical lists)
- Southern Folklife Collection (direct access to online Southern Folklife Collection finding aids also accessible through the browseable alphabetical lists)
- University Archives
- African American Resources Collection (materials gathered by North Carolina Central University and made available through the Manuscripts Department)

Online Guides:

- Guide to African American Documentary Resources in North Carolina
- Guide to Publishing Archives and Collections
- North Carolina Writers in the Southern Historical Collection
- Selected Business History Resources
- Women in Country Music Discography

INSTRUCTIONS

The manuscript number for the Samuel Hairston Papers is: #  
Submit · or · I Give Up

Done
Series 1/1
Boxes 1-39

Biography:

Nathaniel Louis Nathanson was born in New Haven, Connecticut, on December 21, 1908, the son of Samuel Jacob and Lillian Danie Nathanson. He obtained his B.A. (1929) and L.L.B. (1932) degrees from Yale and his S.J.D. degree (1933) at Harvard.

Nathanson served as law clerk for Circuit Judge Julian J. Mack (1933-1934) and for Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis (1934-1935). During 1935-1936 he was an attorney for the Securities Exchange Commission. Northwestern University appointed Nathanson assistant professor of law (1936), associate professor (1941) and professor (1940). He served as an associate general counsel in the Office of Price Administration during 1942-1945. Nathanson became Northwestern University's Frederick P. Vose Professor of Law in 1948, and professor emeritus in 1977.

From 1948-77, Nathanson was several times a visiting professor at the University of Washington and once at Arizona State University. After retirement he continued teaching at least one term a year at either the University of San Diego or at Northwestern. He also taught at Hastings College of Law. Nathanson held a Fulbright Lectureship in Japan in 1954-1955, and served as a visiting lecturer there in 1965.

Nathanson held many positions with governmental agencies and public service organizations. Important among these were memberships on the Illinois Public Utility Laws Commission, the Chicago Executive Committee of the Anti-Defamation League of B'hai Brith and the Executive Board of the Illinois Division of the American Civil Liberties Union. In 1958-59 he was a consultant to the Indian Law Institute and from 1959 through 1975 served as an institute member. Nathanson was for many years the American Representative Director and member of the Board of Directors of the Japanese American Society for Legal Studies. He was a...
TARO/Univ of Houston: left-hand nav bar, cookbook style

Nikki Van Hightower Papers, 1967-1997

Descriptive Summary

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Title: Nikki Van Hightower Papers
Dates: 1967-1997
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Quantity: 14 boxes; 7.5 linear feet
Identification: uhvanvh96
Princeton: Top table of contents; links to descriptive summaries of sub-elements

William E. Colby Papers

1935-1996
Bulk Dates: 1975-1995
MC#113

William E. Colby, c. 1990s

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Introduction

William E. Colby, Princeton University Class of 1940, was a career agent in the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Director of Central Intelligence from 1973-1976. However, the bulk of the collection documents his post-CIA career and contains correspondence, speeches, writings, newspaper clippings, and subject files that reflect Colby’s professional and private interests.
Guide to the George Rosen Papers

Guide to the George Rosen Papers
(Manuscript Group 862)

Tom Hyry

Yale University Library, Manuscripts and Archives,

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Overview

Creator: Rosen, George, 1910-

Title: George Rosen papers

Date(s): 1912-1978

Quantity: 15.25 linear ft.

folder search results, slide 1

- overall success rates 82-91%
- top TOC functionally superior based on t-scores
- left nav bar also very good
- most difficulty using PDF
- t-scores show results valid for population
folder search results, slide 2

folder-level tasks, plotted search times  on-site users only
survey/task correlations, slide 1

- speed not only imp. factor
- need finding aids and digital libraries that meet needs of novices, domain experts, and system experts
- these needs are very different
survey/task correlations, slide 2

- speed in using electronic finding aids correlates more closely to computer experience (system expertise) than archival/library experience (domain expertise).
suggested design features
(based on observations, interviews and comments)

- need complete description and context for domain experts
- provide browse option alongside search boxes for systems experts
  - Will use a search box if available
  - . . . but actually find known items faster w/ lists
  - include option for search w/in single finding aid
- keep it simple
  - limit search options
  - no pop ups; beware complex javascript
  - don’t break CTRL-F
  - PDF?
  - use standard search algorithms (Google-like)
Introduction

Penny the Pup, Purina University Class of 1998, was a career agent in the K-9 unit of the Urbana police department. The bulk of her collection includes speeches, writings, newspaper clippings, and subject files reflecting his professional and private interests in preventing crime and retrieving sticks.

Size: 8.31 linear feet (15 archival boxes, 3 8x10 boxes)
conclusion

this presentation, and a full version of the paper are available from a link at:

http://web.library.uiuc.edu/ahx/workpap/

I would like to thank the Research and Publication Committee of the University of Illinois Library, which provided support for the completion of this research.

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