



Opening Up Our Finding Aids: A Forum Discussion of © and CC Licenses

Unconference Session
MARAC Fall 2015
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Overview

- Introductions
- [CC licenses](#)
- Discussion questions
- Final thoughts



In an era of linked data and complex relationships between LAMs, should we as archivists be (or want to be) more open to others using and re-using finding content?



As archival description continues to evolve with updated or new standards (EAD, EAC-CPF, and early work on EAF) and new approaches, does a CC license make sense?



**Are there clear benefits to
placing a CC license on a finding
aid?**



**Are there disadvantages to
placing CC licenses on finding
aids?**



The next 6 slides contain summary points and questions raised during the discussion. They were added to the slides before submitting to the MARAC repository in November 2015.

Notes from discussion (1 of 6)

- Scope & content and series description: who would want these and do we really care if someone would.
- When writing a finding aid, you want it to be disseminated. Are there places/times where this could be an issue?
- In cases of collection descriptions, sometimes people would WANT to pull from the finding aid because the author has put something in the best language/phrasing.
- DPLA requires CC0 license on content.

Notes from discussion (2 of 6)

- Scope & content and series description: who would want these and do we really care if someone would.
- When writing a finding aid, you want it to be disseminated. Are there places/times where this could be an issue?
- In cases of collection descriptions, sometimes people would WANT to pull from the finding aid because the author has put something in the best language/phrasing.
- DPLA requires CC0 license on content.

Notes from discussion (3 of 6)

- Academic librarians may create finding aids as work product. They may not have direct control of over how it can be shared.
- Ideally, the default would be a license that excluded for-profit use/reuse.
- Finding aids are being harvested and broken apart (i.e. projects like [SNAC](#)), so how do we label all the little pieces of a finding aid, which end up out of the context of the whole?
- DPLA and OCLC have statements on CC) licensing of metadata. Institutions retain rights for digital objects themselves. Finding aids are still a form of metadata, but they different from the strictly information metadata on digital objects

Notes from discussion (4 of 6)

- OCLC database is copyrighted as database, not as individual records. Are libraries copyrighting catalog records? (This would make for a kind of comparison and apparently there was an academic conversation about this some years back.)
- If finding aids are considered something to be used on CVs,, both for jobs and for internal promotion/tenure, shouldn't they have some sort of protection?
- There is a clear distinction (or at least there should be one) between factual information and contextual information.
- It would be interesting to look at the copyright and related policies of a range of institutions.

Notes from discussion (5 of 6)

- Is there an archivist's name attached to a finding aid? Sometimes there's no one to attribute to or to claim ownership of the text, which makes it the institution's work.
- If finding aids are viewed as work for hire, administrators might view things differently.
- At some institutions, people put their names on finding aids, but they might still consider work for hire.
- If there's a finding aid online that users can add to, comment on, contribute to, © would set this in stone and obviate the possibility of future additions or creative commentary. (American Archivist article from the early 2000s on this topic.)

Notes from discussion (6 of 6)

- What can one creatively do with a finding aid? Artists can make word clouds, get ideas for biographical characters, book plots on agency records.



Want to keep talking? Let's do it!

Contact me! If there's group interest, I'll work on a virtual space, too!

Kira A. Dietz

Acquisitions and Processing Archivist
Special Collections, University Libraries
Virginia Tech

Email: kadietz@vt.edu

Twitter: @archivistkira