



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


Unconference Session  
MARAC Fall 2015  
Roanoke, Virginia  
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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?
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# 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 archivists 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](mailto:kadietz@vt.edu)

Twitter: @archivistkira