



Archives West at Twenty Years: Sustainability through Community

Jodi-Allison-Bunnell, Maija Anderson, Trevor J. Bond

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Jodi Allison-Bunnell

Montana State University-Bozeman, jodi.allisonbunnell@montana.edu

Maija Anderson

Orbis Cascade Alliance, manderson@orbiscascade.org

Trevor J. Bond

Washington State University, tjbond@wsu.edu

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Archives West at Twenty Years: Sustainability through Community

Abstract

Archives West is a regional aggregation of descriptions of archival collections held by institutions in the Pacific Northwest and Mountain West. While many similar regional aggregations have struggled to reach sustainability, Archives West is one of a few that is fully funded by its participants, and continues to grow in both scale and scope. We hypothesize that there are unique cultural qualities of the Archives West community that have supported its growth, including a philosophy of empowering participants, transparent budget processes, clear statement of value to resource providers, and maintaining expectations that all institutions will contribute through service and fees.

Keywords

archives and special collections, archival discovery, regional collaboration, finding aids, consortium administration

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Cover Page Footnote

The authors acknowledge that the success of Archives West is the result of the work of many individuals. While we have done our best to recognize as many people as possible, we inevitably have missed a few. We celebrate all of the people who have contributed and hope that every one of them will celebrate their own as well as our collective success.

Peer Reviewed

Archives West at Twenty Years: Sustainability through Community

Jodi Allison-Bunnell (jodi.allisonbunnell@montana.edu)

Head of Archives and Special Collections and Senior Archivist, Montana State University – Bozeman

Maija Anderson (manderson@orbiscascade.org)

Operations Director & Program Manager, Open Strategies and Digital Content, Orbis Cascade Alliance

Trevor J. Bond (tjbond@wsu.edu)

Dean of Libraries, Washington State University

Abstract

Archives West is a regional aggregation of descriptions of archival collections held by institutions in the Pacific Northwest and Mountain West. While many similar regional aggregations have struggled to reach sustainability, Archives West is one of a few that is fully funded by its participants, and continues to grow in both scale and scope. We hypothesize that there are unique cultural qualities of the Archives West community that have supported its growth, including a philosophy of empowering participants, transparent budget processes, clear statement of value to resource providers, and maintaining expectations that all institutions will contribute through service and fees.

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Introduction

Archives West is a regional aggregation of descriptions of archival collections held by institutions in the Pacific Northwest and Mountain West. Begun in 2002-2005 as one of the early large-scale collaborations of this type in the United States, Archives West currently comprises over 43,000 finding aids contributed by 40 institutions. The only aggregation that is larger is the Online Archive of California with 55,000 collection descriptions.¹ Archives West is fully funded by its participants and continues to grow in both scale and scope—a marked contrast to its peer programs, as thoroughly explored in

the California Digital Library's recent project to envision a national-level aggregation for archival descriptions.² We hypothesize that there are unique cultural qualities of the Archives West community that have supported its growth, including a philosophy of empowering participants and maintaining expectations that all institutions will contribute through service and fees. These qualities have helped the program meet three key strategic challenges: moving from grant-funded project to sustainable program; achieving technical sustainability; and empowering participating institutions.

Context and Background

Archival description is built on principles that include centrality of provenance and describing materials as collections rather than items. Descriptive practices center on creation of “finding aids,” which are narrative descriptions of both the whole collection and its components.³ These practices are both distinct from, but broadly related to, library practices. Archival descriptive practices have undergone profound changes in the last thirty years. Beginning in 1995 with the Berkeley Finding Aids Project, archivists moved finding aids (which were formerly narrative documents with very little shared practice), toward a framework that became Encoded Archival Description, or EAD.⁴ The first version of EAD was released in 1998, with subsequent versions in 2002 and 2015.⁵ The process for transitioning legacy finding aids to EAD—or creating new ones—is referred to as “encoding.”⁶ Until the creation of ArchivesSpace (a collection management and description tool) in 2009, there were no widely usable systems for institutions to encode, search, and display EAD finding aids without local technical expertise to build and maintain a special-purpose system.⁷ ArchivesSpace and its predecessor tools were, in turn, a response to a widespread sentiment that EAD was simply too difficult for all but the most well-funded institutions to implement.⁸ And, while it was possible to simply encode finding aids as HTML and post them on an institutional website, doing so offered no structured search and tended to limit discovery.

Because of its technical complexity, EAD quickly became a *raison d'être* for collaboration, and the first aggregations were founded when institutions were adopting EAD and other standards. Most finding aid aggregations were started in two clusters, the first around 1998–2002, and the second around 2008–2010. Only three aggregations—Chicago Collections Consortium, Empire Archival Discovery Cooperative, and University of Nebraska

Consortium of Libraries—have emerged since 2010.⁹ The literature of the late 1990s frames aggregations as a solution for creating tools and infrastructure for EAD adoption. Describing the American Heritage Project¹⁰ in 1997, David Seaman wrote, “Archivists working in smaller institutions may have to go outside their immediate environment for these partnerships, perhaps by *forming a consortium with neighboring institutions*” (emphasis mine).¹¹ The explicit or implied specific goals of aggregations as they were formed between 1998 and 2017 focused primarily on helping archivists, librarians, and curators improve collection description and discovery and make it easier for researchers to find materials. Aggregations were important, even essential, sources of the tools that made it possible for repositories to adopt EAD, which was widely acknowledged to be inaccessible to most practitioners.¹²

Another important trend in archives and special collections in the late 1990s and early 2000s was the emergence of standards. Unlike description for library materials, which was already standardized by the late nineteenth century, archival description has only become standardized in the last forty years—and only strictly in the last fifteen. However, the move toward standardization has a long history. The Library of Congress attempted nationwide bibliographic control with its *Checklist of Collections of Personal Papers in Historical Societies, University and Public Libraries and Other Learned Institutions in the United States* in 1918. The National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections (NUCMC), made possible with the adoption of a method for cataloging manuscripts in 1954, was the first large-scale description and access project.¹³ NUCMC’s presence, in turn, encouraged more standardization from institutions.¹⁴ However, for many years the focus on the unique nature of the archival record proved a significant barrier to both consistency and automation. Richard Berner envisioned a national archival network that provided more nuanced information than

could be contained in a catalog record in 1981.¹⁵ His study more thoroughly examined the issues of collecting and appraisal biases, description accuracy, and the interaction of collection- and file-level description. The topic bore further examination throughout the 1980s and early 1990s with seminal articles by Bearman, Yakel, Tibbo, Pugh, Meissner, Spindler and Pearse-Moses, Roe, and Prietto.¹⁶ Steven Henson's 1983 *Archives, Personal Papers and Manuscripts* gave guidance on the formation of identities (personal and family names, organizations) but not on the construction of key elements of archival description like titles, descriptive notes, and dates.¹⁷ A review of descriptive standards and automation from 1989 from SAA's Working Group on Standards for Archival Description shows a profession ready for a greater degree of standardization in order to support automation.¹⁸ *Describing Archives: A Content Standard* (first issued in 2007) defined for the first time a shared set of practices for describing archival materials, including formation of titles, date expressions, scope and contents, restrictions, language of materials, and name and location of repository.¹⁹ Before collaboration and networks, institutions generally argued that special collections materials were *so special and unique* that descriptive metadata had to also be similarly unique. However, many changes were essential in a networked environment. For instance, the DACS requirement to identify which institution holds a collection is eminently sensible knowing that, with the emergence of the Internet researchers reading your finding aids were no longer necessarily sitting in your institution's reading room!

Challenge 1: From Grant-Funded Project to Sustainable Program

In 2000, archivists in the Northwest began discussing a shared approach to EAD during two regional meetings: Online Northwest and Northwest Archivists. None of our institutions (except for the University of Washington Libraries) had the technical capacity to encode,

search, and display EAD finding aids on their own. We also recognized the value of contributing our finding aids to a shared repository so that researchers could benefit from our related, regionally focused, collections. At the spring 2000 Northwest Archivists meeting, participants who took an EAD workshop from Michael Fox and Kris Kiesling agreed that we needed to write a grant proposal for the National Endowment for the Humanities Division of Preservation and Access. Larry Landis and Elizabeth Nielsen from Oregon State University agreed to manage the grant with Larry serving as the Principal Investigator. With Trevor Bond's enthusiastic urging, Al Cornish, systems librarian at Washington State University, gamely took on the challenge of building the technical infrastructure for what we named Northwest Digital Archives (NWDA).²⁰ We ultimately received two rounds of NEH funding: Phase 1, 2002-2005; and Phase 2, 2005-2007.

During NWDA's initial period of development, we stated in the grant application that we would determine a way to sustain the project beyond initial funding. Like most grant-funded projects did at the time, we wrote it into the proposal naively, almost as an afterthought. We quickly found that accomplishing this would require particular skills and significant effort, and made those efforts a focus area for the second NEH proposal. Because OSU and most of our other participating organizations were part of the Orbis Cascade Alliance, and with the knowledge that John Helmer, its Executive Director (ED) and founder, had experience with this type of transition, Larry Landis invited John to be on our advisory board for the second grant. John was key to helping the Steering Team ask and answer the right questions (a skill set for which he was well known nationally).

The Orbis Cascade Alliance is an academic library consortium with members in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho that provides a large-scale integrated library system, resource

sharing, electronic resource purchases, and support for unique collections. Except for its own grant-funded beginning in 1993, it has never received funding from a central (e.g. state or federal) source. Instead, its basic operations are funded exclusively by annual membership dues. Costs are distributed among its members based on financial formulas; each Alliance investment program has a separate formula for allocating costs among members. Most dues formulas include a flat fee shared equally among all institutions, combined with variables based on data such as student FTE and materials budgets. Dues formulas are shared transparently with participants, and regularly revisited by the organization's Board of Directors. Board priorities and decisions are advised by Alliance Council, which is composed of all library deans and directors from the member libraries. Members also contribute to shared work and collaborative governance through a system of institutional representatives to each program, as well as service on Alliance working groups. Working groups provide member leadership at the Alliance, and their responsibilities can include recommending policy and standards, setting best practices and recommended procedures and developing documentation and training for their peers.

During discussions with the NWDA Advisory Board and NWDA leadership, one option for sustainability that emerged was for NWDA to become an Alliance program. In order to consider that option, the Alliance required that NWDA come forward with a plan to fully support the full costs of operating the program: technical infrastructure, overhead for the salaries of the ED and support staff, and the costs of the annual meeting of participating institutions. With the Alliance's well-formed existing budget process and the budgets from two grant cycles that included documented direct costs and cost share from all participants, we had a good framework (and a requirement!) to surface all direct and personnel costs and to not "hide" any of them. We knew that if we

were an Alliance program, we would need to find a way to distribute the cost of sustaining the program among the participating institutions. We understood that no one institution could bear the costs for everyone else and that there could be no "free rides" for any institution.

NWDA participants gathered around a conference table at Gonzaga University's Foley Library and talked about money. To prepare for this conversation, Helmer had two high-level pieces of advice for us: "Everyone has a budget, it's a matter of how you choose to spend it," and, that there is no magic formula for how to distribute costs, just keep it very simple and to find something that everyone felt was fair. So, after an open conversation and considering the challenges of one particularly cash-strapped institution that needed to delay its initial payment, we came to a formula that combined institution type (e.g. public college/university by student FTE; private college/university; non-academic) and number of finding aids in NWDA. For participating institutions, that translated to annual fees that ranged from \$1714 to \$13,034.²¹

With the need for each participating institution to advocate for paying annual fees, we needed to clearly state the value proposition of the program. Thus, we began the process of describing the service as uniquely needed to provide access to archival collections. The Consortium Administrator and Steering Team composed what we colloquially called the "Give and Get" list and provided the list to the representatives from the proposed program participants.²² Those individuals then went to their administrator(s) to ask for their support. Of the 21 institutions that participated in the grant, only one declined to join under the membership structure. With a budget and cost distribution in place, NWDA was invited to become part of the Alliance in spring 2007 through a vote of the organization's governing Council. On July 1 of that year, NWDA became a program of the

Alliance, and Jodi Allison-Bunnell was hired as its half-time Program Manager. Eight Alliance member institutions that had previously not participated signed up to be part of the program, bringing the total number to twenty-eight institutions.

What we learned through this process was the necessity of clearly stating all costs, approaching budgets and cost distribution openly and transparently, and the need to describe the value proposition in a way that was clearly understandable by deans and directors. For instance, “finding aid” is a term understood by archivists, but is frequently not understood by other information professionals. “Collection description” is a more accessible term, along with an emphasis on the importance of collection-level description and keyword search. We demonstrated how names and topics deep in a multi-level description could be easily found and offered side-by-side comparisons to other common forms of description like MARC and digital collection records. “Show, don’t tell” became an operating rule for all communications with deans and directors.

Through the Alliance’s annual budget process and periodic revisiting of its cost distribution model after 2007, we learned that the transition from project to program doesn’t happen once. Instead, it is a continuous one that requires repeated communication tailored to the audience. We learned to use case studies and more visual formats rather than more specialized jargon and to issue a brief annual report with clear value statements when annual invoices were sent. Occasionally the lessons in how to have these discussions were difficult, but they were always productive. It’s a fair point for a library dean or director to say, “You all talk about all of these systems, but they all have ‘archives’ in the title, and I don’t understand whether they are all the same thing.”²³ We developed greater awareness of and empathy with our governing group and what they needed to better understand an area of libraries

that, in most cases, was not where they had the most direct experience.

The cost distribution model we developed during the initial transition to the Alliance was a fine start, but the per-finding-aid component quickly emerged as unsustainable. First, it placed an outsize financial burden on the institution that had nearly 1,000 finding aids in NWDA, Washington State University. We wanted to incentivize institutions to put in as many finding aids as they had to expose as many collections for researchers as possible. Instead, institutions began to calculate the cost of adding descriptions to NWDA and even held some back. In order to accomplish our goal of more access for researchers, we transitioned to a model that sustained the flat fee and based the remainder by type of institution, with three levels within the public university category for student FTE. Revisiting member fees and making necessary changes is an important task, and one that the Alliance engages in periodically. At present (for the fiscal year 2025), fees range from \$1559 to \$3494 annually.²⁴

As part of the grant-to-program transition we sustained a cohesive group of representatives from participating institutions that became a lifeline for many practitioners in far-flung institutions. During the grant-funded period, representatives from participating institutions met twice a year. Grant support for travel made it possible for representatives separated by hundreds of miles to attend. We also did some of those meetings in conjunction with the Northwest Archivists annual meeting. Going forward from 2007, we continued to meet annually for either a full or half day prior to Northwest Archivists. A carefully planned program each year focused on building relationships, fomenting conversation about needs and wants, and ensuring that all participating institutions were fully up to date on the program. Attendees consistently reported that the meeting was valuable and that they wanted to continue meeting, even with the

added cost of coming to Northwest Archivists a day early. Post-COVID, the annual meeting lives on as a virtual event that consistently has 20-40 attendees.

Periodic program assessments were also part of the picture and consistently showed the value that archivists at participating institutions placed on the program. Respondents to the first assessment in 2008, for instance, overwhelmingly responded that participation was “very effective” at sustaining a habit of collaboration that encouraged participants to solve problems together.²⁵ That same year, in response to “What is the best thing about NWDA?” participants responded with “access to expertise I don’t have,” “placing our collections in context with others in the region,” and “that we don’t have to host our own finding aids!” Responses to another assessment in 2016, which was wound into strategic planning efforts, were similar; asked again what the best things about the program was, they most often cited the community, support, and culture; the technical infrastructure; the standards/best practices; national exposure and power; and training. When asked what the program should be doing and wasn’t, most responded “nothing.” Asked whether their membership fee and the time they invested in the program was matched by the level of support and services they received, most said yes, and most of those said yes emphatically.²⁶ In 2022, the Orbis Cascade Alliance established a new practice of evaluating all its investment programs on a five-year rolling basis. Partly due to its strong history of assessment, the Archives & Manuscripts service was selected as the first to undergo this process. The 2022 evaluation was conducted by a committee made up of participants, chaired by Trevor Bond at Washington State University. The evaluation, which included a survey and follow-up conversations with participants, found that the service was meeting or exceeding member needs, with 41% of respondents reporting they were “very satisfied” and 59% reporting they were “satisfied.” The evaluation

also found that Archives West continued to be a core part of our participants’ workflows and public presence. Many respondents stated that Archives West was the only way their institution could provide access to finding aids, with comments such as: “[staff], ‘I appreciate the expertise to keep the service running and the technical expertise to publish finding aids. The service has saved our bacon.’ Others illustrated the impact of participation for their researchers: ‘Love using Archives West in instruction, great having finding aids across Northwest repositories all in one place. Makes it really useful to teach students how to do archival research and use finding aids.’”²⁷

In adopting NWDA in 2007, the Alliance hoped to develop more digital collections services, and hired a full-time Digital Services Program Manager at the same time as they hired the NWDA Program Manager. The Digital Services program was fully funded by all Alliance members, but the organization did not wish to subsidize NWDA from its core operations. The Alliance’s governing Council required us to prove annually that NWDA participant fees covered all aspects of the support required, including a portion of fixed costs (e.g. percentages of the salaries of all involved personnel). The rarity of this practice is clear in the California Digital Library’s 2019 report, *Finding Aid Aggregation at a Crossroads*, a comprehensive assessment of finding aid aggregators like NWDA/ Archives West that provides background for CDL’s more recent project report on the possibilities of a National Finding Aid Network (NAFAN).²⁸ In that report, the authors found that almost all of Archives West’s peers in the United States had no identified budget of either funds or personnel, were started but not sustained by grant funds, and were dependent on host organizations for financial and personnel support. As a result, they have been unable to update infrastructure or to expand services or participants and often must seek technical

support “under the radar” from their host institutions.²⁹

The NWDA program pursued grants for new developments, largely in collaboration with the Digital Services Program. We received an IMLS Collaborative Planning grant in 2009 to explore expanded digital and unique content services at the Alliance; a National Leadership Grant from IMLS in 2011-2014 to develop an innovative integration of digital content with finding aid metadata; funding from the National Historic Publications and Records Commission for augmenting the capabilities of small libraries with part-time archivists and to begin supporting Archivist’s Toolkit (and later ArchivesSpace) for all NWDA contributors who wished to use it; IMLS funding for an exploration of a finding aid aggregation for all the western states that presaged the more recent National Finding Aid Network project; NEH funding to add more institutions to the program in 2013; and two years of support from Oregon LSTA in 2016 and 2017 to develop a Digital Public Library hub for Alliance members and to share metadata and rights statements training with both Alliance members and contributors to the Washington Rural Heritage initiative at the Washington State Library.³⁰ None of these grants sustained NWDA’s core services, but many strategically added participating institutions to the program, allowing participant fees to remain modest and avoid sharp increases by spreading them across a larger number of institutions.

The Alliance did build on the program to create organization-wide support for digital collections. As that transition happened, and as the Digital Services Program Manager left the organization, the NWDA Program Manager’s job expanded to full-time as she took on an organization-wide role that was supported by all members, not just by NWDA members. Along with the above-mentioned grant projects, she and member working groups invested considerable energy into exploring possible new

program offerings—including digital preservation, an institutional repository, and support for Open Educational Resources (OER)—at the Alliance.

For all this work—from grant proposals and implementation to user testing, training, and creating communications—we also created and sustained relationships with and among participants through service on working groups. These groups are central to the Alliance, and program managers are responsible for developing and sustaining member relationships through these service opportunities. This commitment to member-driven leadership ensures that program managers receive regular, authoritative feedback and suggestions from participants, and that program changes align with needs and emerging issues at member institutions. Member staff also consistently report that service on working groups gives them interesting opportunities for professional development far beyond what their institution can provide. The expectation that all participants may serve on Alliance working groups also opens its own doors: many individuals who happen to work at small or less-resourced institutions have skills that are very valuable and are eager to use them!³¹

The successful transition from grant-funded project to sustainably funded program happened through a combination of strong community building during the grant period, but very much because of the structure and composition of the Alliance. The lack of a single funding source for the Alliance meant that the organization had deep and sustained experience with assembling its budget from its members and doing so in a transparent way. The expectation that all institutions, no matter their size, could and should contribute financially meant that there was no expectation that the largest institutions would “carry” the smaller ones. And the opportunity to understand the needs of Council members to see the merit of the

work of NWDA and to meet those needs was truly essential. The organizational and strategic challenges that we faced sharpened the service and helped it find, communicate, and refine its value proposition.

Challenge 2: Achieving Technical Sustainability

In 2002, NWDA chose Ixiasoft's TEXTML database system for its fundamental technical infrastructure. At the time, several NWDA peers also used Ixiasoft, including the United Kingdom's Access 2 Archives (A2A) portal. The application, including the document base, search and retrieval, and web interface, were all built by Al Cornish at Washington State University with the help of computer science graduate students. During the second grant phase, Cornish also created a compliance checker based on the EAD Report Card, which had just been released by the Research Libraries Group (RLG).³²

By 2011, and after working groups conducted several rounds of user testing that formed the basis for moderate revisions to the site (and very usefully kept the group from creating features more useful to archivists than to the users), several opportunities emerged. Institutions in Utah were dissatisfied by the approach taken by the Utah Academic Library Consortium for finding aid hosting and approached the Alliance to ask if their finding aids could be included in NWDA. With funding from IMLS, we undertook a collaborative project with Utah and the Rocky Mountain Online Archive to examine the opportunities and sustainability of a western archival aggregation that included Utah, New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and Alaska. After examination of metadata compatibility, cost models, and governance, the group concluded that an organizational merger of the involved entities was not viable. However, NWDA elected to expand its eligible member states to

Utah and to any other Western state that did not have access to another aggregator.³³

With this opportunity, we also faced both the need to rebrand the user interface (Montana is arguably in the Northwest; Utah is not) and to consider new opportunities for the back-end infrastructure. TextML was becoming expensive, so we considered other infrastructure options. We found that there were no obvious commercial alternatives, and that open-source options meant additional staff overhead. The organization was unwilling to bear the cost of updating the backend with an open-source solution, so we moved forward with a project, led by the program manager and the Alliance's IT manager Keith Folsom, to substantially redesign the user interface while leaving the backend mostly unchanged.

The program had a solid history at this point of doing significant user testing and had a strong sense of the types of users that our participating institutions wished to serve. To inform the redesign, the program manager created and conducted interviews and site comparison tests with both experienced users of the site and novices. Participating institutions recruited test subjects on behalf of the Alliance. This research resulted in some robust information about how users conducted their research and what they needed the site to do and be. We reconsidered the need for a help section and other supports that explained finding aids and decided to work on the premise that a well-designed site needs little or no explanation.³⁴

To assist with creating a name and graphic identity that communicated the site's purpose and contents clearly, we engaged a marketing firm to create some options to be tested with both end users familiar with NWDA and program participants. From a moderately lengthy list of initial options, we considered "Archives West," "Haystack," and "Archives Engine West" and ultimately chose the first one. A major change in the graphic identity was to

move away from examples from digital collections (which, along with the “Northwest Digital” component of the name, conveyed the false impression that the site contained many digital collections rather than primarily descriptions of collections) to images of stacks and reading rooms from the participating institutions. We eliminated the advanced search (which analytics showed was very seldom used) but built essentially the same search capabilities into faceting options. After some final testing, the new site went live on July 1, 2014.

The only major change in the backend during this process was the implementation of a repository registry for institution contact information. This was in part a response to inconsistent institution names that participants had encoded into their finding aids over the years that reflected both organization change and errors in encoding. A repository registry, where participants change information once and re-use it in all finding aid presentations, was a major efficiency for all involved and allowed consistent faceting and sorting of results. A similar registry is proposed for the National Finding Aid Network.³⁵ After national-level conversations about making finding aid metadata open for re-use, we also built in an option for an institution to apply a public domain or CC-BY license to all or some of its finding aids. This enabled an important use of finding aids: To be cited or included in Wikipedia articles, which drives traffic to archival resources and contributes to the reliability of the information in those articles.³⁶

One key measure of technical sustainability is how often participating institutions depend fully on a consortial infrastructure rather than maintaining a local one in addition to, or instead of, depending on the consortium. As the one institution that was already doing EAD encoding and delivery prior to the development of the consortium, the University of Washington continued to use its local EAD infrastructure during the first years of NWDA. With staff

changes and vacancies that affected capacity, UW’s local instance and what was in NWDA fell severely out of registration between 2007 and 2014. Their decision to switch to Archives West as their sole public-facing infrastructure was based on a desire to give IT staff more time to do tasks that must be done locally and to be more standards compliant. The latter came about after an extensive internal process to re-envision processing workflows.³⁷

Five years after the front-end redesign, participants in Archives West increasingly raised concerns not only about increasing costs, but also about technical issues with the database. These included issues with ADA accessibility of the public interface and limitations on “back-of-house” functionality for archivists as they uploaded their finding aids to the database. Alliance central staff were able to resolve some of these issues based on recommendations from working groups, who identified and prioritized user experience issues; and the work of an accessibility consultant, who provided clear guidance on making the public interface more functional for users with disabilities. However, as the data footprint of Archives West grew, the software was stretched to its limit, with sluggish load times and system crashes becoming a frequent occurrence. The cost of the TEXTML software license had also increased significantly, and other suitable solutions were now available on the market. Simply put, after over a decade, Archives West was showing its age. While Alliance central staff were able to address some issues through custom scripts and minor changes to the public interface, it was evident that TEXTML was no longer the right fit.

In May 2021, the Alliance published a “Commitment to Open Principles and Practices,” the result of a consortium-wide effort to adopt open standards as a core consortial strategy.³⁸ The Alliance took an intentionally broad perspective, to include open education and Open Access publishing, as well as open

source software. The Alliance also designated that a senior position, held by Maija Anderson, to serve as Assistant Director and Program Manager for Open Strategies and Digital Content. This role included program leadership for Archives West. This organizational commitment provided guidance and leadership support to Alliance central staff who were seeking an alternative to TEXTML.

The Alliance's Systems Program Manager, Tamara Marnell, reviewed available open-source alternatives, and selected BaseX, an open source XML database management system, for the next iteration of Archives West. BaseX has an active, highly engaged user base and a liberal open license. BaseX is also feasible for the Alliance to run with its very limited central IT resources.

The Alliance recognized that "open" does not mean "free," but it can mean greater resources at more sustainable, predictable, and controllable costs. The Alliance sought to manage the transition to open source so that it would be cost-neutral for members. The cost of proprietary software was replaced by greater investments of central staff time - particularly that of the Systems Program Manager, who is the sole information technology professional on Alliance central staff. Another cost of adopting open source was the need for additional cloud server space to run the large database of finding aids. To manage these valuable resources, the Alliance carefully plans and prioritizes staff projects, and monitors the use of its Amazon Web Services storage.

The migration from TEXTML to BaseX was a major undertaking for Alliance central staff between Spring 2021 through February 2022. For the first several months, the Systems Program Manager worked to develop the database and migrate its content. Later in fall, the Assistant Director and Program Manager for Open Strategies and Digital Content created documentation and tutorials for participating

archivists and coordinated member-driven user testing in the development server. The "new" Archives West went live early 2022, with a successful launch informed by participant feedback.

For end users, impacts of the migration included improvements to search features and functionality, faster load times for finding aids, and improved mobile display. For archivists, back-of-house improvements included the ability to delete and replace finding aids and generate usage statistics as needed. Previously, these operations could only be carried out by Alliance central staff. While the migration and its associated changes to the system represented a significant investment of Alliance staff time, it paid off immediately in terms of user satisfaction.

Over two years after our migration to BaseX, the "new" Archives West remains stable and working as expected. Managing the open source software requires the Systems Program Manager to monitor and engage with the BaseX community, run updates, and perform regular maintenance. While costs are still carefully managed, they are much more controllable, and the Alliance is no longer concerned about the escalating costs of proprietary software. Archives West is also much more customizable, which has facilitated major recent improvements, such as the ability to harvest finding aids directly from ArchivesSpace.

The migration and update of the Archives West infrastructure is a contrast to the other state and regional aggregators. Of the aggregators like Archives West founded between 1998 and 2017, the inability to update or upgrade infrastructure was a central problem cited by most that remain in operation.³⁹ The Alliance's financial and technical approaches and an engaged, user-focused membership has enabled Archives West to avoid this pitfall.

Challenge 3: Empowering Participating Institutions

At the inception of NWDA, all but one of its institutions needed training and technical support to implement what was then a new standard, EAD. *Describing Archives, a Content Standard* (DACS), along with Greene and Meissner's seminal article on transforming archival collection preparation,⁴⁰ also emerged during the development of Archives West. As a result, participants learned both EAD and DACS together, and explored the "More Product, Less Process" methodology together. Learning together and member empowerment are two important elements of Archives West's success.

NWDA's initial set of EAD Best Practices were based on the Research Library Group's EAD Best Practices, which provided a well-considered base to build on.⁴¹ Marsha Maguire, of the University of Washington Libraries' Special Collections department, became the "patron saint" of the NWDA Best Practices, investing time and expertise in maintaining this crucial documentation. Elizabeth Nielsen of Oregon State University succeeded Maguire in this crucial role. As Nielsen moved to other areas of focus at OSU, the program manager took on the essential task of best practices maintenance, informed by a working group.

As we planned the first NEH grant, we found that our needs exceeded both NEH's funds and their mission. Archivists from several institutions could not participate in an encoding-centric project because the finding aids they had to encode were incomplete or so far removed from modern standards that they would have to be completely re-done to be worth encoding. A subgroup of institutions formed the Northwest Archives Processing Initiative (NWAPI) and received two grants from the National Historical Publications and Records Committee (NHPRC), the granting arm of the National Archives.⁴² During the first NHPRC grant, the group hired consultant Brad Cole who assisted in developing

a regional finding aid standard that anticipated elements of DACS, which was still in development. As part of their second project, the group hired Mark Greene as a consultant to apply the "More Product, Less Process" method to a regional processing initiative, and achieved results of about three hours of labor per linear foot of collections.⁴³

Initially, NWDA took an approach to training that was very similar to other developing consortia during this stage of development: it sent at least one person from each institution to the Society of American Archivists EAD workshop and contracted out most EAD encoding of existing finding aids to a vendor, ArchProteus. While this got many finding aids encoded and available, the SAA workshop was expensive and did not address our EAD Best Practices. Beginning in the second grant phase, we developed and delivered our own EAD training. But there was another issue: institutions that hadn't changed how they created finding aids continued to create them as word processing documents that got encoded after they were done. This made encoding an "extra" that was difficult to do in the crush of other work. Clearly, we needed to support workflow revisions at institutions along with doing training specific to our best practices. Beginning in about 2008, the program manager re-developed the training to also include reconsideration of institutional workflows. Without telling institutions how they should do their work, we presented options, wisdom from other institutions, and (most of all) encouraged approaches that integrated the work efficiently.

Other learning opportunities built both programs at institutions and the Alliance program. Beginning in 2010, and as part of working with a group of small liberal arts colleges during the "Supporting and Building Emergent Archival Programs in the Northwest" grant from NHPRC, the program began hosting Archivist's Toolkit (AT). The Program Manager collaborated with the California Digital

Library's (CDL) Adrian Turner to develop a comprehensive and engaging set of webinars on implementing and using AT, from pre-import metadata cleanup to EAD export, to support both NWDA and CDL institutions. Bringing on these institutions (most of which had archivists who spent half of their time or less on archives and had other duties) meant that we grew beyond our initial group of participants, nearly all of which were full-time archivists. We also entered a new phase of empowering participating institutions to be both supported and independent actors. This paid off when, beginning in 2017, we implemented ArchivesSpace (ASpace) for twenty-eight institutions. Some of the most critical actors in this implementation were at small institutions but stepped forward to share their expertise and encouragement. The Alliance central staff had no experience with ASpace, but the structure of the program made that a non-issue.⁴⁴ The Alliance's expectation that skills and capability exist in professionals at institutions of all sizes and resource levels bore fruit.

Throughout its development, Archives West has prioritized empowering its participants to work independently in the system. Alliance central staff support participants with training, troubleshooting, and referrals to documentation and peer networks. However, central staff do not encode finding aids for participants, nor do they submit them to the database. While asking our users to create EAD finding aids that meet Archives West's requirements sets a high bar, it has proved to be a key to Archives West's sustainability as a program: During staffing transitions and shifting workloads at Alliance central, our participants have continued working in Archives West relatively unimpeded. If workflows revolved around the constant availability of one or two staff members of a small non-profit consortium, participants' work would frequently be bottlenecked.

The institutions that created and implemented the original grants developed a solid habit of

collaboration. Exterior advisers (including Robin Chandler and Adrian Turner from CDL) contributed their wisdom and advice, but all the participating institutions contributed to the work in some way. Consistently, Archives West participants advocate for more independence in the system, requesting self-service analytics reports, automated harvesting of finding aids from ArchivesSpace, and improved user experience and system documentation. Central staff have made it a high priority to meet these firmly expressed member needs, rather than trying to keep up with the "next big thing" in the archives profession: for example, we have twice studied the possibility of upgrading to EAD3 and both times have concluded that the relatively low impact for both participants and end users did not merit the investment of resources⁴⁵; rather, we have focused our limited resources on meeting high-impact demands.

Looking back on this approach after 20 years, Alliance central staff acknowledge that while putting our participants in the driver's seat has contributed to a collaborative, committed, and highly empowered user base, it has also meant that institutions with very few resources cannot participate in the service. Our service model assumes that institutions are not only able to make a financial contribution to cover shared expenses, but also that they have a staff member with capacity to create finding aids that meet Archives West's requirements and contribute to shared decision-making and collaborative work. As a result, more than half of participating institutions are academic libraries. Also represented are state historical societies, regional museums, large public libraries, and a relatively small number of community organizations. A challenge that we will study in 2024-2025 is how to expand participation among less resourced institutions—which include county historical societies, tribal entities, public libraries, and other heritage organizations. How can these collections be included in Archives West, while maintaining our commitment to financial sustainability for all participants?

Looking further into the future of inclusion and collaboration, we observe that inherently, a finding aid centered model excludes institutions that don't create finding aids; those institutions are more likely to express interest in creating and hosting digital collections. Those needs are addressed in Oregon and Washington with a shared DPLA hub and support from both state libraries, but neither fully meets the needs nor offers a one-stop shop for all unique resources held in these states. Can Archives West become a locus for those institutions? This question also confronts the National Finding Aid Network, which aims to serve a wide variety of institutions by working with any type of finding aid: EAD, HTML, and text documents.⁴⁶

Conclusion

In a retrospective on twenty years of Archives West at the 2024 meeting of Northwest Archivists, we considered all these themes and more. Those and other discussions led us to wonder how we'd sum up the "secret sauce" that's been part of the sustainability of this program. It may be that rather than a "secret sauce," we have instead a "master sauce": a traditional Chinese practice of cooking meat in a combination of liquids that is saved over a lifetime and passed on to heirs.⁴⁷ The Archives West master sauce may lack star anise and tamari, but it arguably boils down to a few major elements, each of which has contributed to a successful transition from grant to member-provided funding, technical sustainability, and empowering participants:

- Being community-driven from the start and intentionally nurturing habits of collaboration over time
- Participating institutions learning new standards, technology, and practices together
- Empowering participating institutions as much as possible rather than relying on a large central staff to provide services

- An organizational home that requires transparent finances, continuously communicating value, and a combination of member fees and services contributed to working and governance groups
- A focus on assessing user experience, centrally designed but conducted by participating institutions, as a key component of decision making
- Constantly evolving through engagement with other regional and national-level initiatives

As almost all other state and regional finding aid networks struggle or even fail, as funding from the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) becomes tenuous, as the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) looks to transform after years of being unable to find their master sauce, and as Social Networks and Archival Context (SNAC) tries to recover from its loss of support from the National Archives, Archives West is a rare success story.⁴⁸ The state and regional aggregators that failed reported that failure stemmed from an over-reliance on grant funds, the adoption of infrastructure that proved to be inadequate to the task, and the reliance on a single individual as the champion for the project.⁴⁹ Perhaps the only other initiative in this sector that is as or more successful is ArchivesSpace, which also has a stable organizational home and well-supported structure of member-provided funding.⁵⁰

None of the qualities we've described are an end point. Rather, they are elements in an ongoing process of surviving and thriving. Archives West will continue to focus on responsive services to participating institutions and maintaining a well-functioning and accessible public interface. For instance, through participation in NAFAN and looking at the unprecedented end user research conducted by OCLC Research during that project, we've learned that the majority of our end users are new to archival research and may be looking at a finding aid for the first time.⁵¹ This discovery

calls for a more supportive presentation of finding aids for end users landing on the site through search engines (the majority of the Archives West traffic). Similarly, a recent consortium-wide assessment found that participants in Alliance programs have varying levels of awareness of consortial training resources, a need for “just in time” training that supports sustainable local workflows, and a strong desire to advance their professional networks through collaborative learning.⁵² These findings will inform a more focused assessment of emerging training needs for Archives West. We also look forward to leveraging our sustainable practices to make Archives West accessible to more small and under-resourced institutions. Success is not a single state nor a destination; it is a constant evolving and responding to changing needs and opportunities. Archives West has a strong history of change and continuity that positions it well for a future of continuing evolution.

Acknowledgements

The authors acknowledge that the success of Archives West is the result of the work of many individuals at diverse educational institutions across the Pacific Northwest. While we have done our best to recognize as many people as possible, we inevitably have missed a few. We celebrate all the people who have contributed and hope that every one of them will celebrate their own as well as our collective success.

¹ “About OAC,” California Digital Library, accessed June 3, 2024, <https://oac.cdlib.org/about/>.

² For a fuller exploration of this, see Jodi Allison-Bunnell, “Finding Aid Aggregation: Toward a Robust and User-Centered Future,” *The American Archivist* 85, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2022): 556–586; and Adrian Turner et al., “Building a National Finding Aid Network: Final Report” (UC Office of the President, California Digital Library, 2024), <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/6xr6q38m>.

³ “Finding Aid,” in *Dictionary of Archival Terms*, Society of American Archivists, <https://dictionary.archivists.org/entry/finding-aid.html>.

⁴ The first version of EAD was in Standard Generalized Markup Language (SGML), of which XML is a subset. “Standard Generalized Markup Language,” in *Dictionary of Archival Terms*, Society of American Archivists, <https://dictionary.archivists.org/entry/standard-generalized-markup-language.html>.

⁵ “EAD: Encoded Archival Description (EAD Official Site),” Library of Congress, accessed June 28, 2024, <https://www.loc.gov/ead/>.

⁶ “Encoded Archival Description,” in *Dictionary of Archival Terms*, Society of American Archivists, <https://dictionary.archivists.org/entry/encoded-archival-description.html>.

⁷ ArchivesSpace had two predecessor systems, Archon and Archivist’s Toolkit, which were combined to create a full suite of description and access services. “History.” ArchivesSpace, accessed June 28, 2024, <https://archivespace.org/about/history>. Other systems used to manage EAD finding aids included DLXS.

⁸In 1998, James Roth explored methods for deploying EAD finding aids; ten years later, Sonia Yaco detailed the barriers to adopting EAD, primarily a lack of technical skills, small staffs with many responsibilities, and the poor quality of available tools. James M. Roth, “Serving up EAD: An Exploratory Study on the Deployment

and Utilization of Encoded Archival Description Finding Aids," *The American Archivist* 64, no. 2 (2001): 214–37; Sonia Yaco, "It's Complicated: Barriers to EAD Implementation," *The American Archivist* 71, no. 2 (2008): 456–75. Kathy Wisser's survey on EAD tools also clearly identifies the need for better tools. Katherine M. Wisser, "EAD Tools Survey," Society of American Archivists, EAD Roundtable, August 2005, <http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/ead/EADToolsSurvey.pdf>. In 2007, Carla Gilgenbach et al. described the development of the EAD Factory at OhioLINK, the state consortium of Ohio libraries. Gilgenbach, Cara Amy McCrory, and David Gaj, "The OhioLink EAD Factory: Consortial Creation and Delivery of EAD," *Archival Issues* 31, no. 2 (2007): 151–170. But the most comprehensive resource on this question, and the one that clearly points to the role aggregation plays, is the report published in 2010: Michele Combs et al., "Over, under, around, and through: Getting around Barriers to EAD Implementation" (OCLC Research, 2010), <http://www.oclc.org/content/dam/research/publications/library/2010/2010-04.pdf?urlm=162938>. The report identifies the political/organizational, and technical issues that institutions face. The authors offer consortia and aggregations as potential solutions for both types of issues: "Numerous state-, regional- or subject-based consortia have pooled resources to benefit member institutions by lowering barriers to EAD implementation."

⁹Figure 8: Timeline of Aggregator and Meta-Aggregator Founding," p. 14, in Jodi Allison-Bunnell and Adrian Turner (editor), *Finding Aid Aggregation at a Crossroads* (UC Office of the President, California Digital Library, 2019), <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5sp13112>.

¹⁰ The American Heritage Project was a joint grant awarded to the University of California at Berkeley, Duke University, Stanford University, and the University of Virginia from the National Endowment for the Humanities to produce the first major body of EAD finding aids and to test the hypothesis that those guides could be used

as both local resources and as components of a multi-institution union database.

¹¹ David Seaman, "Multi-Institutional EAD: The University of Virginia's Role in the American Heritage Project," *The American Archivist* 60, no. 4 (1997): 436–44.

¹²Allison-Bunnell, *Crossroads*, p. 15.

¹³ Lee E. Grove, "The National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections," *ALA Bulletin* 54, no. 9 (1960): 769–771.

¹⁴ Terry Abraham, "NUCMC and the Local Repository," *The American Archivist* 40, no.1 (1977): 31–42.

¹⁵ Richard C. Berner, "Toward National Archival Priorities: A Suggested Basis for Discussion," *The American Archivist* 45, no. 2 (1982): 164–174.

¹⁶ Mary Jo Pugh, "The Illusion of Omniscience: Subject Access and the Reference Archivist," *The American Archivist* 45, no. 1 (1982): 33–44; Thomas Elton Brown, "The Society of American Archivists Confronts the Computer," *The American Archivist* 47, no. 4 (1984): 366–382; David Bearman, "Archives and Manuscript Control with Bibliographic Utilities: Challenges and Opportunities," *The American Archivist* 52, no. 1 (1989): 26–39; Kathleen D. Roe, "From Archival Gothic to MARC Modern: Building Common Data Structures," *The American Archivist* 53, no. 1 (1990): 56–66; Dennis Meissner, "Online Archival Cataloguing and Public Access at the Minnesota Historical Society," *Archival Issues* 17, no. 1 (1992): 31–48; Elizabeth Yakel, "Pushing MARC AMC to Its Limits: The Vatican Archives Project," *The American Archivist* 55, no. 1 (1992): 192–201; Robert P. Spindler and Richard Pearce-Moses, "Does AMC Mean 'Archives Made Confusing'? Patron Understanding of USMARC AMC Catalog Records," *The American Archivist* 56, no. 2 (1993): 330–341; Carole Prietto, "Automating the Archives: A Case Study," *The American Archivist* 57, no. 2 (1994): 364–373.

¹⁷ Steven L. Hensen, *Archives, Personal Papers, and Manuscripts: A Cataloging Manual for Archival Repositories, Historical Societies, and Manuscript Libraries* (Society of American Archivists, first edition, 1983).

¹⁸ "Report of the Working Group on Standards for Archival Description," *The American Archivist* 52, no. 4 (1989): 440–461.

¹⁹ *Describing Archives: A Content Standard* (Society of American Archivists, 2007). While *Archives, Personal Papers, and Manuscripts* was published in 1983, it focused primarily on standards for creators (as a focused digest of *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules*), without a structure for what constitutes a minimal level description or for the contents of the different elements.

²⁰ Alan Cornish and Trevor James Bond, "Developing and Sustaining the Northwest Digital Archives." *Journal of Digital Information*, 9, No. 2 (2008) accessed June 28, 2024, <https://jodi-ojs-tdl.tdl.org/jodi/index.php/jodi/article/view/245>.

²¹ NWDA budget for FY08, final. Unpublished file copy.

²² The essential contents of this list remain in place for institutions considering membership: "Participating in A&M," Orbis Cascade Alliance, accessed May 23, 2025, <https://www.orbiscascade.org/programs/osdc/archives-and-manuscripts-collections/participating/>.

²³ Paraphrased from an Alliance Council member, ca. 2011.

²⁴ "Participating in A&M."

²⁵ NWDA program assessment, 2008. Unpublished file copy.

²⁶ NWDA Strategic Planning survey, 2016. Unpublished file copy.

²⁷ Trevor James Bond et al., "Archives and Manuscripts (A&M) Service Evaluation," Orbis Cascade Alliance, accessed October 7, 2024, <https://www.orbiscascade.org/programs/osdc/archives-and-manuscripts-collections/>.

²⁸ Allison-Bunnell, *Crossroads*.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

³⁰ As of this writing, the Washington Rural Heritage program has become a DPLA hub for both Washington and Oregon. The Alliance elected

not to sustain its DPLA hub in 2023. Oregon Digital, which is the shared repository for the University of Oregon and Oregon State University, uses the Mountain West Digital Library's regional hub to share content with DPLA.

³¹ Because of reduced capacity at member institutions, the Alliance has recently moved away from an *expectation* that all members contribute to consortium operations by serving on working groups. However, it continues to provide opportunities like those described here.

³² "EAD Report Card," Society of American Archivists, accessed June 3, 2024 <https://www2.archivists.org/groups/technical-subcommittee-on-encoded-archival-standards-ts-eas/encoded-archival-description-ead/ead-report-card>.

³³ Utah and Nevada did not otherwise have access to an aggregator. Arizona had Arizona Archives Online (AAO); California had the Online Archive of California (OAC); and New Mexico, Colorado, and Wyoming had access to Rocky Mountain Online Archive (RMOA).

³⁴ This degree of engagement with end users was rare among aggregators and the archives community, as acknowledged in Allison-Bunnell, *Crossroads*, 8. The recent work by CDL and OCLC Research on end users for aggregations is unprecedented. Chela Scott Weber, Lynn Silipigni Connaway, Brooke Doyle, Lesley A. Langa, Merrilee Proffitt, Bruce Washburn, Itza A. Carbajal, *Summary of Research: Findings from the Building a National Finding Aid Network Project*, (OCLC Research, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.25333/7a4c-0r03>.

³⁵ Turner et. al., 2024, 24.

³⁶ The importance of this development is fully explained in Heather Briston and Merrilee Proffitt. "Time to Open Up: The Why and How of Opening Up Archival Finding Aids and the Unintended Consequences of Being Closed" *Archival Outlook* (March/April 2016): 11.

³⁷ Allison-Bunnell, *Crossroads*, 30. For the University of Washington, the transition to sole use of Alliance infrastructure was the one result of a process described in Allison-Bunnell, Anne Jenner, and Emily Dominick, "Leaning Into the Fu-

ture, Together: Applying Business Process Management to Increase Efficiency and Manage Change in Archives and Special Collections." *College & Research Libraries* 85, no. 3 (May 2024). Conor Casey, Mark Carlson, Emily Dominick, and Anne Jenner of University of Washington Special Collections, along with IT Services & Digital Strategies Director Jennifer Ward, were key advocates for this change.

³⁸ "Commitment to Open Principles & Practices," Orbis Cascade Alliance, accessed June 24, 2024 <https://www.orbiscascade.org/about/news/commitment-to-open-principles/>.

³⁹ Allison-Bunnell, *Crossroads*, 7.

⁴⁰ Mark A. Greene and Dennis Meissner, "More Product, Less Process: Revamping Traditional Archival Processing," *The American Archivist* 68, no. 2 (2005): 208–63. "Processing" is the term used by archivists for preparing analog or digital collections for use by researchers. "Processing," in *Dictionary of Archival Terms*, Society of American Archivists, <https://dictionary.archivists.org/entry/processing.html>.

⁴¹ RLG EAD Advisory Group, *RLG Best Practice Guidelines for Encoded Archival Description* (Research Libraries Group, 2002), <https://www.oclc.org/content/dam/research/activities/ead/bpg.pdf>.

⁴² The first phase, 2002–2004, included Western Washington University, Montana Historical Society, Oregon Historical Society, Pacific Lutheran University, University of Montana and Whitworth College. Phase two, 2005–2007, included the Alaska State Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Lane Community College, Whitworth College, Eastern Washington State Historical Society, Whitman College, Seattle Municipal Archives, Pacific Lutheran University, University of Montana, and Western Washington University. Pacific Lutheran University managed the first grant, and Whitworth managed the second.

⁴³ Janet Hauck, "How to Get More 'Product' While Doing Less 'Process,'" *Archival Outlook* (May/June 2008): 6–7.

⁴⁴ Members of the Archival Collections Management Working Group during the ArchivesSpace implementation were Eva Guggemos of Pacific University; Nathan Georgitis of University of Oregon; Mark Carlson of University of Washington; Sarah Shipley of Seattle Municipal Archives; and Amber d'Ambrosio of Willamette University.

⁴⁵ "Recommendations on EAD3," Orbis Cascade Alliance, accessed June 25, 2024, <https://www.orbiscascade.org/programs/osdc/awsg/>.

⁴⁶ See Turner et. al., 2024, 24–25.

⁴⁷ "Chicken in Chinese Master Sauce," The Splendid Table, <https://www.splendidtable.org/story/2012/03/01/chicken-in-chinese-master-sauce>.

⁴⁸ See Jodi Allison-Bunnell, "The Puzzle of Large-Scale Digital Collections: Have we Reached an Inflection Point?" *College and Research Libraries News* 85, no. 5 (May 2024), <https://doi.org/10.5860/crln.85.5.215>. In August 2024, the National Archives and Records Administration announced that it was withdrawing support for SNAC and assigning two full-time staff members effective October 1. Personal communication, Jerry Simmons to Jodi Allison-Bunnell, August 29, 2024.

⁴⁹ Allison-Bunnell, *Crossroads*, 28. Since the creation of the Crossroads report, another regional aggregator (Rocky Mountain Online Archive) has ceased operations for similar reasons.

⁵⁰ "FAQs," ArchivesSpace, accessed May 23, 2025, <https://archivesspace.org/about/faqs>.

⁵¹ *Summary of Research: Findings from the Building a National Finding Aid Network Project*, "8–11.

⁵² "Consortial Training Needs Assessment," Orbis Cascade Alliance, accessed June 25, 2024, <https://www.orbiscascade.org/training/reports/>.