Putting Descriptive Standards to Work. Edited by Kris Kiesling and Christopher J. Prom. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2017. 362 pp. Index. Softcover. $39.99. $29.99 for SAA Members.

Putting Descriptive Standards to Work is the latest entry in the Society of American Archivists' Trends in Archival Practice series, which features concise, applied, user-oriented modules on topics pertaining to the development, use, management, and preservation of archival collections in the digital realm. The volumes in this series comprise modules on distinct topics loosely grouped together around issues such as archival arrangement and description or appraisal and acquisition strategies. Each module usually includes an array of illustrative case studies, endnotes, acronym lists, and detailed bibliographies, and is made available individually in electronic formats. In keeping with the series' stated commitment to agility and responsiveness, SAA encourages users to mix and match modules to develop resources that suit their particular repositories and inclinations.

The first module, "Implementing DACS: A Guide to the Archival Content Standard" by Cory L. Nimer, is a granular examination of the most recent version of *Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACS).*[1] Nimer's analysis proceeds element by element, introducing each rule with basic questions to clarify its aim and providing multiple examples. Nimer repeatedly stresses how any DACS implementation requires careful negotiation within a particular repository's priorities and resources, and correspondingly offers brief suggestions for initiating conversations about the complexities of DACS elements.

The second module, "Using EAD3" by Kelcy Shepherd, is divided into six sections that consider the advantages of and criticisms leveled against EAD; examine EAD's relationship to other descriptive standards; provide an overview of EAD3; discuss the stages of EAD implementation and offer additional "recommendations" to facilitate the implementation; and provide three implementation case studies from different repositories and two examples of EAD-encoded finding aids. Shepherd's section on "Implementing EAD" is worth highlighting, as the considerations she raises offer a strong foundation for developing a thoughtful, scalable EAD implementation.

The third module by Katherine M. Wisser focuses on "Introducing EAC-CPF." Wisser sketches the development of the *Encoded Archival Context–Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families (EAC–CPF)*[2] standard, which, unlike EAD (different facets of which are explored across this volume), describes agents that either create or are associated with archival materials. Given the relative newness of this standard, it is not surprising that this module offers only one—very thoughtful—case study about its implementation. This section provides an overview of early projects employing EAC–CPF, each of which sounds fascinating enough for a reader to wish they could be effectively distilled as additional case studies, however incomplete. Wisser's concluding overview of "The Impact of EAC–CPF on Descriptive Standards" offers an insightful treatment of the interactions between an emerging standard and various long-standing descriptive systems and practices, as well as between EAC–CPF and the linked data movement.

The last module by Aaron Rubenstein describes "Sharing Archival Metadata." He carefully limns a "Brief History of Structured Data in Libraries and Archives" and describes the landscape of tools available to share and link data. A high-water mark of Rubenstein's writing is his lucid yet concise explanation of Application Programming Interfaces (APIs),

though additional examples could have enhanced the section on APIs in archives. Likewise, the sidebars on serialization and the JavaScript Object Notation (JSON) standard, among other subjects, are quite accessible. Two case studies accompany this module and, like Shepherd's module, it offers practical, pithy "recommendations."

One of the many valuable components of *Putting Descriptive Standards to Work* is the attention it affords the painstaking, often labyrinthine processes within the international archival community that underlie the development and implementation of standards. In her "Why EAD?" section, Shepherd writes: "given its roots in practice and the consensual process that led to its development, EAD reflects the needs and experience of the international archival community as a whole" (p. 161). In their succinct descriptions of the diverse contexts in which these standards emerge, progress, flourish, or fail, Nimer, Shepherd, Wisser, and Rubenstein attend to the breadth and scope of visible and invisible communal labor that enables the existence and application of these descriptive standards. Such a consciousness-raising exercise about the archival enterprise is invaluable on its own merits.

The agility and brevity prized by the modules in the Trends in Archival Practice series sometimes yields gaps. For example, Shepherd's module provides only one resource in the endnotes about Extensible Stylesheet Language Transformations (XSLT); a few more sentences on this language would not have been amiss. Similarly, Rubenstein offers a brief overview of Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH), but not of the Virtual International Authority File (VIAF). How the authors and editors decided to allocate space within these brisk chapters at times elicits puzzlement. As is true of case studies featured in other publications in the series, the majority here highlight the experiences of larger university repositories, which can further reify the challenges that smaller or differently resourced repositories encounter in implementing these standards and finding support within the associated communities of practice.

These concerns, however, do not diminish the efficacy of this series' approach, which emphasizes—as *Putting Descriptive Standards to Work* aptly demonstrates—the need for iterative, collaborative workflows and for establishing a comfort level with employing multiple tools and perspectives to address professional concerns. This unifying focus on accessibility and scalability renders this latest volume an articulate, insightful, and, indeed, user-oriented, asset for archivists in numerous contexts. As Kiesling explains in the introduction to her module, "Description is the foundation of archival work" (p. 1). *Putting Descriptive Standards to Work* does a masterful job of affirming how this vital element of archival practice demands both attention to present challenges and consideration of future needs to "serv[e] society's perpetual memory."[3]

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1. For more about DACS, visit https://github.com/saa-ts-dacs/dacs.
2. For more about EAC-CPF, visit http://eac.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de.
3. Luciana Duranti, "Origin and Development of the Concept of Archival Description," *Archivaria* 35 (1993): 52.