Society of Archivists Data Standards Group

A Guide to Archival and Related Standards
Standards applicable to archives; for the digital delivery of repository guides, finding-aids, and images of material from collections.

Title
EAC-CPF Encoded Archival Context – Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families

Name of Standards Developing Organisation
Society of American Archivists Encoded Archival Context Working Group

Current version
<http://eac.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de>

Replaces
EAC beta version, 2004

Abstract
EAC-CPF is a communication standard for encoding in Extensible Markup Language (XML) information about the corporate bodies, persons and families associated with the creation and maintenance of archives. It is compliant with the International Council on Archives’ International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons and Families (ISAAR(CPF))\(^1\).

Description
EAC-CPF was released by the Society of American Archivists Encoded Archival Context Working Group in early 2010. It had, however, been under development since 1998, when the need was first identified for a standard, compliant with the International Standard for Archival Authority Records—Corporate Bodies, Persons, Families (ISAAR(CPF)), for the independent encoding and exchanging of information about the corporate bodies, persons and families associated with the creation and use of archives. The new standard was intended to parallel Encoded Archival Description (EAD)\(^2\), the standard for encoding archival descriptions created in compliance with the General International Standard Archival Description (ISAD(G))\(^3\). A beta version of the new standard, called

\(^{1}\) International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons and Families (ISAAR(CPF)) <http://www.ica.org/sites/default/files/ISAAR2EN.pdf> (accessed 12 February 2010)


Encoded Archival Context, was released in 2004\(^4\). This was followed by several years of testing around the world. In 2007, the Society of American Archivists' Encoded Archival Context Working Group was formed to take the work forward and create a standard version.

EAC-CPF provides for the independent description of individuals, families and corporate bodies that create, preserve, use and are responsible for and/or are associated with records. Over time, other types of contextual entities, for example functions, may evolve under the larger EAC umbrella, but currently its primary purpose is to standardize the encoding of descriptions about agents to enable the sharing, discovery and display of this information in an electronic environment. It supports the linking of information about one agent to other agents to show the relationships amongst record-creating entities, and the linking to descriptions of records and other contextual entities, especially those encoded according to EAD, MARC and similar standards.

The EAC-CPF schema (available as W3C and Relax NG) and the associated tag library define a set of elements that can be used to describe agents and the structure of relationships amongst those elements. It suggests a minimum set of elements for describing an entity, but defers recommendations for the appropriate use of other elements to application guidelines developed for specific implementations.

Due to the fact that EAC-CPF has only just been released, there are few applications yet. Projects employing EAC-CPF are, however, under development in Australia and the US.

Next month
Next month we will look at the Resource Description Framework (RDF).

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