

OAI-ORE and Description of Electronic Records

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Abstract: Electronic records (institutional and personal) present many challenges for archivists. Much has been written about preservation, authenticity, and metadata. As we begin to accession larger number of these files, we are grappling with how to manage description as well.

As archivists, we need to exert intellectual and physical control of these objects for management, preservation, and access. This work requires undertaking two fundamental activities: identifying the record, and documenting the context of the record -- including its creator, relationship to other records, and place in intellectual order. These activities must still take place with electronic records. But what are the alternatives to using traditional descriptive tools to manage large aggregates of digital objects? Are there tools that will enable us to leverage automation scripts, XML, and semantic languages to achieve our goals more flexibly and easily?

The Open Archives Initiative Object Reuse and Exchange standard (OAI-ORE) provides a framework for expressing the relationships between aggregates of web-based resources. Manifested as an XML feed, ORE assigns an identity to an collection of resources, and expresses the structure and nature of relationships between those resources as a Resource Map.

In an archival setting OAI-ORE could be an ideal tool for managing description of collections and improving documentation. This poster will illustrate use cases using ORE to:

- Document the provenance and original order of an accession of digital objects
- Express the intellectual arrangement of a processed collection
- Create alternative, flexible access tools that reflect users', rather than archivists', needs.

About the author:

Anne Sauer has served as Director of the Digital Collections and Archives and University Archivist for Tufts University since 2004. In this role she oversees Tufts' records management program, archives and manuscript collections, and co-directs the university-wide digital repository program.

Anne has worked on or managed a number of digital projects since joining the Tufts archives in 1998, including grants from IMLS and NEH. Advocacy, preservation, and the transformation of single projects to sustainable programs have been particular areas of focus.

Anne has presented on digital project management, electronic records management, and digitization services for a variety of professional organizations including New England Archivists and the Society of American Archivists. She is also an adjunct professor in the Archives Management program at the Simmons College Graduate School of Library and

Information Science in Boston and regularly presents workshops on digital project management for the Northeast Document Conservation Center.