

## **Collecting User Input on a Shared Finding Aid Site: Initial Reactions and Outcomes**

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**Abstract:** The Wisconsin Historical Society recently completed the first two phases of a user study of its shared EAD finding aid site, *Archival Resources in Wisconsin*: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/wiarchives>. The goal of the study is to better understand how researchers use our online finding aids in an unmediated environment, and to use these findings to improve the usability of our site. The first two phases—an observational study and a focus group—were completed in April 2008. The final phase, an online survey, is expected to be completed in fall 2008.

The observational study tracked the activities of 26 participants as they completed a series of eight tasks aimed at answering specific questions about the usability of the site. Participants also completed brief entrance and exit surveys. Fifteen participants returned for a focus group session, which allowed us to seek suggestions for improvement and discuss points of confusion.

This poster focuses on the planning and implementation of the study, including steps in the planning process and methodologies selected. Highlights from the data are shared, and initial outcomes from the first two phases of the study are discussed.

### **About the author:**

*Jacquelyn Ferry* is the Cataloging Archivist and EAD Coordinator for the Wisconsin Historical Society, where she is responsible for the cataloging of manuscript collections and public records, encoding of collection finding aids, and maintenance of the archives' online catalog. Ms. Ferry has worked at the Wisconsin Historical Society since 2006, prior to which she worked at the University of Maryland, NARA, College of Staten Island, and New York Public Library. She holds a B.A. in History from Boston University and a M.L.S. from the University of Maryland.