

ArchivesZ Version 2: Progress in Visualizing Archival Collections

JEANNE KRAMER-SMYTH

Abstract: ArchivesZ is a prototype of an information visualization tool. It tackles the challenge of understanding the scope and quantity of available archival records and manuscripts by leveraging the structured data available in EAD encoded finding aids. By representing the distribution of subjects and time periods using the metric of total aggregate linear feet, ArchivesZ enables users to gain a better grasp of the total available research materials than they would by viewing a standard search result list. Multiple subject term visualization interfaces enable a deeper understanding of the relationships among subject terms and time periods for a given selection of collections.

ArchivesZ targets three distinct audiences. Archivists and manuscript curators could use ArchivesZ to improve their understanding and validate the metadata of collections, both local and at other institutions. Researchers and historians could use ArchivesZ to assist in the identification of institutions with archival collections fitting the criteria of their research. Finally, students in the university setting could be encouraged to explore locally held record groups and collections.

During spring of 2009 the ArchivesZ project has rebuilt the application from the ground up - including modifications to the user interface and performance improvements. A broader set of finding aids were collected and analyzed. This poster will document the research methods, challenges encountered and the final product of this phase of the project. It will also document next steps and data challenges that must be addressed before ArchivesZ can be developed into a full-scale enterprise application.

About the author:

Jeanne Kramer-Smyth is the author of [Spellbound Blog](#). A recent graduate of the [University of Maryland's iSchool Archives, Records and Information Management program](#), Jeanne comes to the field of Archival Science with over 18 years of experience designing relational databases, creating custom database software and participating in web based software development. She has brought her great interest in information visualization, structured data and helping individuals find what they are looking for to her studies, personal research and writing. Jeanne currently holds a position as a Metadata Analyst and SEO Coordinator within the Interactive Technology division of Discovery Corporation. She divides her time between doing search engine optimization (SEO) for Discovery's network websites and working on taxonomies and controlled vocabularies.