

# **Supporting Statewide Best Practices Through Outreach and Education: Three Years of Opening Archives in Florida (2005-2008)**

**JOHN NEMMERS AND KYLE RIMKUS**

**Abstract:** From 2005-2008, the Florida Center for Library Automation (FCLA) was awarded funds through the Institute of Museum and Library Services' (IMLS) Library Services and Technology Act to encourage, through training and consulting, the creation and sharing of encoded electronic inventories of collections in cultural heritage repositories such as libraries, archives, museums, historical societies and government agencies throughout the state of Florida. The goals of this project have been to raise the general level of technical expertise among archivists in the state, to promote the use of Encoded Archival Description (EAD) and Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACS) in Florida, and to increase archival information sharing in the state by encouraging Florida's cultural heritage institutions to contribute EAD finding aids to the statewide database hosted by FCLA, Archives Florida. Opening Archives in Florida has successfully fostered collaboration between state agencies and several public and private repositories, and has made significant contributions to the establishment of statewide best practices for archival description. This poster will present an overview of Opening Archives in Florida, presenting evaluation methods, data and outcomes related to three years of outreach and education dedicated to promoting best practices and standards for creating and sharing encoded archival descriptions in Florida.

## **About the authors:**

*John Nemmers* is the Descriptive & Technical Services Archivist at the University of Florida Smathers Libraries. In this position he is responsible for all description activities, including authoring EAD finding aids. He manages archival collections pertaining to Florida politics, landscape design, architecture, and environmental history. Since 2005 he has served as steering committee chair for "Opening Archives," an effort led by the Florida Center for Library Automation to promote the adoption of archival standards and best practices throughout Florida. In this capacity he served as an instructor for several EAD workshops and took a lead role in developing the training curriculum and the authoring templates used by EAD implementers. John holds an MLS from Florida State University (1997) and a Specialist degree in Archives & Special Collections Librarianship from FSU (1998). He presently serves as President for the Society of Florida Archivists.

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the Advisory Board of Opening Archives, for which he also provides consultation and training to South Florida archives interested in adopting EAD. At the University of Miami, he has led the campus-wide implementation of the Archon open source collection management tool, and oversees a Digital Production Lab whose services support the digital needs of his university's archives and special collections.