

# **EAD (Entire Archives Digitized): Development of a Working Model for Large Scale Digitization**

**KAREN WEISS**

**Abstract:** The Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, the world's largest repository of primary source materials documenting art in America, has developed *Collections Online*, a working model for large scale digitization and online presentation of entire manuscript collections. The platform presentation will detail the results of the multi-year development of this system, built on a foundation of EAD combined with innovative features to support web accessible workflows and online presentation.

*Collections Online* provides online access to the Archives' collections that have been digitized in their entirety, primarily the papers of artists, art historians and other art world figures. These are not selected highlights or digital images presented according to themes, but rather entire manuscript collections. The online presence amassed in less than four years of 73 fully digitized collections representing over 450 linear feet and amounting to over 660,000 digital files, with more added on a regular basis, underscore that large scale digitization can be achieved, notably by building upon fundamental archival approaches.

The system integrates the descriptive metadata found in EAD (Encoded Archival Description) finding aids with corresponding digital content at the full collection level – not just links to selected highlights. The structured XML (Extensible Mark-Up Language) data of EAD finding aids provides the only descriptive metadata for collections scanned in their entirety, and serves as a contextual format for online navigation and access. The underlying database incorporates powerful programming and web interfaces that support and integrate the complex internal archival and scanning workflows necessary for sustaining a large scale institutional digitization program. This result is unprecedented access to the Archives' digital collections and finding aids via the World Wide Web.

## **About the author:**

*Karen Weiss* is the Information Resources Manager at the Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution. Having worked at the Archives since 1980, she has been involved in the steady development of online information systems, first with conversion of their card catalog to the MARC format in the late 1980s, followed by EAD and establishing a web presence in the 1990s, and digitization initiatives in the past decade that incorporate database management to control workflow and dynamically driven web access. Since 2005, Weiss has served with Barbara Aikens, the Archives Head of Collections Processing, as Co-Director of the Terra Foundation for American Art Grant, overseeing a major digitization initiative with a primary focus on digitizing entire collections. Karen

serves as the chair of the Smithsonian Institution Research Information System Advisory Committee, and has organized and taught descriptive cataloging workshops at the Smithsonian. She received her undergraduate degree in History from the University of Buffalo and her MLS from the University of Maryland.