

TARO DRAFT Digital Collection Development Document 2016 March 8

General Purpose Statement:

Texas Archival Resources Online (TARO) is a consortial program that facilitates access historical documents, personal papers, family histories, and more from [member](#) archives, libraries, and museums across Texas to inform, enrich, and empower researchers all over the world.

The primary service currently provided by TARO is making finding aids in the EAD XML format available online in HTML; providing database administration; and facilitating the discovery of finding aid search and retrieval.

Historical Background

After the wide adoption of the Internet in the 1990s, archives around the country began to seek ways to provide online access to their finding aids. After several years of development by staff from the University of California, the Society of American Archivists, the Library of Congress and other institutions, the guidelines for Encoded Archival Description (or EAD) were released in 1998. Subsequently, several state and regional consortia launched websites with member repositories' EAD finding aids, providing patrons with the ability to search the holdings of multiple repositories at once. Examples include the Online Archive of California, the Northwest Digital Archives and Arizona Archives Online. TARO was first supported from a research grant from the Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund (TIF) Board of the State of Texas in 1999. The University of Texas at Austin General Libraries served as the requesting institution, with project partners including the Texas Digital Library Alliance, Rice University, Texas A&M University, Texas State Library and Archives, Texas Tech University, University of Houston, and the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

With these grant funds, UT Libraries established the TARO website, outsourced encoding of several hundred finding aids and provided training to member repositories. Repositories began contributing their own handcoded finding aids in 2002.

TARO's content benefits tremendously from prior federal grants for collections processing. Notable projects include:

- Morris Ernst collection at the Harry Ransom Center (NEH; 20092012)
- Briscoe Center's Hidden Collections processing project (NHPRC funding for 1,500 new finding aids, 20092011)
- Families of Vietnamese Political Prisoners Association Collection at Texas Tech's Vietnam Center and Archive (NHPRC, 2006)
- Records of the Office of the President at the M. D. Anderson Cancer Center (NHPRC, 2004)
- Robert Runyon photograph collection at the Briscoe Center, (NHRPC, 1988)
- Tom C. Clark papers at UT's Tarlton Law Library (NEH, 198485)

- Establishment of the Houston Metropolitan Research Center (NEH, 1973), with processing of the papers of Houston Mayor Oscar Holcombe, Congregation Beth Israel, the Imperial Sugar Company, the League of Women Voters of Houston, the Santa Fe Railroad, artist Emma Richardson Cherry, businessman T. W. House, and architect Alfred C. Finn
- Fannie Ratchford photograph collection at Texas State Archives (Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant funds)
- Prints of early Texas cities collection at Texas State Archives (LSTA)
- William Deming Hornaday photograph collection at Texas State Archives (LSTA)

On average, 500 finding aids have been added to the site per year since 2003, and the content within TARO continues to actively expand, with hundreds of new finding aids added in 2013. TARO's content benefits tremendously from prior investments in collections processing and preservation and UT Libraries continues to contribute 5% of one FTE programmer's time to maintain TARO, with 23 days each year for programming updates, weekly batch uploading of new finding aids, monthly statistical reporting, and periodic troubleshooting of maintenance issues and new member training.

In March 2015, an NEH Humanities Collections and Reference Resources Foundations Grant, Texas Archival Resources Online (TARO) to the 21st Century Collaborative Planning Project, was awarded to the UT Libraries with a start date of July 2015.

Mission

TARO brings together historical documents, personal papers, family histories, and more from archives, libraries, and museums across Texas to inform, enrich, and empower researchers all over the world to discover information for educational and professional purposes, as well as for personal enjoyment—helping users tell their story

Vision

TARO fosters a culture of collaboration among Texas archives, libraries, and museums allowing participants to overcome challenges together. TARO is looking at the yet unknown needs of 21st Century researchers for interacting with content by enhancing the field of archival practice. TARO self-identifies as a community responsive to changes in technology, demographics, and resources.

Audience

While there are more than one million diverse users annually, TARO is most heavily used by professional researchers, undergraduate and graduate students, humanities and history faculty, genealogists, and historians. Secondary users include the creators of TARO records themselves: TARO members and research archivists who often act as mediators of the content for primary users.

TARO has proven a rich resource for a wide variety of researchers including:

- Historians
- Archivists
- Genealogists

- Documentarians
- Educators
- Students
- Artists

Program Scope

TARO will accept Texas archives, libraries, museums, and other cultural agencies with publicly accessible and described collections. Finding aids facilitate the discovery of information within a collection of records and provide a description of records that gives repositories both physical and intellectual control over the materials and assists users to gain access to and understand those materials.

A “finding aid” can include a wide range of formats, including everything from a card index, to a calendar, a guide, inventory, shelf, container list, or registers. A finding aid is a single document that places the materials in context by consolidating information about the collection, such as acquisition and processing; provenance, including administrative history or biographical note; scope of the collection, including size, subjects, media; organization and arrangement; and an inventory of the series and the folders¹.

TARO finding aids may describe a variety of media, including, but not limited to: text and manuscript documents, photographs, postcards, art reproductions, illustrations, sound, video, and representations of 3-D items. The finding aids may describe and link to digital objects.

TARO’s hosting infrastructure is built on the use of Encoded Archival Description (EAD) XML data structure standard for finding aids. TARO makes the finding aids available online in HTML and facilitates discovery.

Subject Strengths

Collections may be regionally centered, but are not limited to Texas subject. General collecting strengths include materials focused on agricultural and natural resources, architecture, art, humanities and social sciences; business, economics, finance, education, government and law. A great number of collections also focus on topics such as immigration, landscapes and nature, literature, religion, sciences and technology, social life and customs, as well as sports and recreation.

Texas-specific topics found within TARO include the Republic of Texas and statehood, peoples of Texas, the Texas revolution, the Mexican war, and Texas cities and regions.

The scope of primary source material available on TARO is as historically-rich and diverse as the state itself, including:

- Manuscripts of world-renowned artists & literary figures
- Records documenting Spanish Colonial Texas

¹ Adapted from the Society of American Archivists glossary search for Finding Aid. <http://www2.archivists.org/glossary/terms/f/finding-aid> Accessed January 6, 2016

- Film footage of the environmental & economic impacts of natural disasters
- Field recordings of Texas folk music traditions
- Photographs documenting major events of the Civil Rights Movement

Participation Criteria

Institutions interested in participating in TARO should submit an email letter of interest to the Co-Chairs of the TARO Steering Committee by May 31 (for a July start) or November 30 (for a January start).

Letters of interest should include:

- Submission of sample EAD finding aid
- Description of the collections
- Current mode of creating finding aids, including the degree of EAD adoption, if any
- Designated contact person
- Evidence of a web presence

Applications will be reviewed by the TARO Steering Committee in June and December to assess the level of technical support required to onboard new members, the commitment to EAD encoding, and the description of collections.

Repositories that have received state and federal funding for collections processing will receive priority consideration. The number of new applicants accepted to TARO per year will vary according to the current capacity of new applicants and TARO's capacity to manage its resources and multiple new partners.

As a general practice, new members will begin twice a year (July and January) in cohorts, with variations possible as current TARO initiatives and staffing allow.

Requirements for Participation

Potential participating institutions must have:

- Collections with finding aids described on TARO should be in the legal custody of their respective institutions
- Adequate staff to support ongoing work and governance of TARO, at a minimum, providing one representative who can be engaged in the TARO community listserv and serve as a repository point person for any errors or other finding aid questions which may arise
- Collections that are open and accessible to the public for the purpose of education, research, and/or public programming, as evidenced by the number of days on which the institution is open to the public, the capacity to support access and use, and the availability of staff for this purpose²
- Willingness to release copyright of finding aids so the metadata can be shared on aggregators like ArchiveGrid.

² Language from National Endowment for the Humanities [Preservation Assistance Grants for Smaller Institutions](#) guidelines on page 7. Accessed March 8, 2016

Standards and Best Practices

TARO uses Encoded Archival Description (EAD), and members will commit to using TARO-approved standards and procedures to develop and disseminate EAD finding aids. In 2016, TARO will adopt EAD Best Practices Guidelines that comply with the EAD 2002 schema and DACS (Describing Archives: A Content Standard) 2nd Edition. TARO will consider moving to EAD3, the newest version of EAD, at a later date.

Collaboration

TARO seeks out collaboration with other similar organizations and programs when the Steering Committee identifies common interests that serve the priority needs of TARO's members, contributors and end users³.

TARO supports shareable and portable finding aid metadata in the spirit of openness and of facilitating modes of research either in development or not yet imagined. The program shares finding aid metadata, in whole or in part, with outside entities that make said metadata publicly and freely available in ways that enhance access and exposure.

Disposition and Digital Preservation

Content may be removed from TARO if material becomes unavailable due to technical difficulties, content is deemed inaccurate, information is determined to be in violation of copyright or other intellectual property rights, or for other reasons determined to be appropriate to staff and administration.

TARO makes appropriate provisions for geographically distributed and complete backup of all files that it hosts.

³ Adaptation of language taken from the Alliance statement on collaboration
<https://www.orbiscascade.org/sharing-finding-aid-metadata-1>