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Archival Content Management Systems: The Future of Collection Management

Thomas D. Steman

St. Cloud State University, tdsteman@stcloudstate.edu

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Archival Content Management Systems: The Future of Collection Management

Midwest Archives Conference
Grand Rapids, Michigan
April 20, 2012

What is an Archival Content Management System?

- Archival management systems are a kind of software that typically provide integrated support for the archival workflow, including appraisal, accessioning, description, arrangement, publication of finding aids, collection management, and preservation

(Lisa Spiro, "Archival Management Software," A Report for the Council on Library and Information Resources, January 2009, http://www.clir.org/pubs/reports/spiro/spiro2009.html/spiro/spiro_Jan13.pdf)

- Is it a magic bullet?

Archival Content Management Systems

St. Cloud State University (SCSU) Archives

- Arrived in July 2007 as the first professionally trained archivist hired at SCSU, and first archives faculty in 11 years
- University Archives founded in 1977
- Challenges included:
 1. Obsolete and incomplete database for description to some of the records held
 2. Not sure what records we had and where they were
 3. Limited staff resources – one half-time position and one student
 4. No established policies, procedures, or workflows
 5. Archives not relevant on campus for long time

Now what?

Archival Content Management Systems

St. Cloud State University Archives – Next Steps

- Essentially started with nothing – both good AND bad
- What are patrons asking for? What patrons are we serving? How do they access information?
- Goals for repository?
- An archival content management system? If so, which one? Archon? Archivist's Toolkit? Past Perfect? Something else?
- Free rein to do whatever I felt would make Archives relevant again

Archival Content Management Systems

Goals for now and for future of SCSU Archives

1. Become relevant now by providing information about SCSU people, property, programs, policies, especially to resource allocators
2. Maximize limited resources, including transformation of archival workflows
3. Help to properly manage records in Archives
4. Provide easy online access to digital objects and finding aids
5. Why wait for a “perfect” solution?

Archival Content Management Systems

Decision-making for selection of an ACMS

- What features are a must?
- What features are a maybe?
- What features that can be lived without?
- What workflows are present? Are they more efficient and fit with current and future needs?
- Can the information be exported to something else?
- Open source or proprietary software?
- Technical support?

Archival Content Management Systems

Why Archon?

<https://libsys.stcloudstate.edu/archon/>

- Created more efficient workflows – no legacy systems, data, or processes to worry of
- Web-based interface (including administrative side), accessed and managed anywhere in the world – no need for client-software; users find Archon familiar and easy to use
- Finding aids and digital objects were available immediately once entered; digital objects could be downloaded and used by users
<https://libsys.stcloudstate.edu/archon/?p=collections/findingaid&id=16&q=>
<https://libsys.stcloudstate.edu/archon/index.php?p=digitallibrary/digitalcontent&id=326>
- Search capabilities across finding aids, digital objects, creators, and subjects, as well as search within finding aids or sets of digital objects; use of subject headings to help collate similar information

Archival Content Management Systems

Why Archon?

<https://libsys.stcloudstate.edu/archon/>

- Attach digital objects and links to collections inside and outside of Archon

<https://libsys.stcloudstate.edu/archon/?p=digitallibrary/digitalcontent&id=1648>

- Information entered once, used many times
- Output of information to formats such as MARC and EAD – no need to use another tool to create, especially for EAD; information could be exported to another tool if needed

<https://libsys.stcloudstate.edu/archon/index.php?p=collections/controlcard&id=15>

- Support from St. Cloud State staff to manage – and maintain – Archon; University Archives responsible for content

Archival Content Management Systems

Workflows

- Streamlined accessioning – information about date transferred, donors, contact information, volume, date, location
- Created description guidelines based on fields available in Archon – enter once, use many times; description, location, acquisition, restrictions, info on finding aid; finding aids look and feel similar
- Digital objects available, using subset of metadata collected when creating master TIFF images; links to digital objects outside of Archon; objects downloadable

Archival Content Management Systems

“Back-room” vs. Access

- Archon did not have some features that other ACMS systems have:
 1. More information about management of records, particularly accessions (including box lists and links to external documents)
 2. Cannot run reports with Archon, which include volume of accessions and processed collections
- Ultimately had to decide what was important for my institution now and go with it

Archival Content Management Systems

Tom Steman
University Archivist and Associate Professor
St. Cloud State University
St. Cloud, Minnesota

Email: tdsteman@stcloudstate.edu

Phone: (320) 308-4753

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