

Encoded Archival Description (EAD) Finding Aid Creation Tool
Technical Overview
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Purpose

The EAD Finding Aid Creation Tool (hereafter referred to as “application”) was created to facilitate the generation of EAD-compliant XML-based finding aids. The resultant finding aids can then be downloaded to the user’s computer for further processing or submitted to a central repository for viewing by the general public.

Outline

The application itself is web-based and does not require any software downloads, updates, etc. Firefox is the recommended browser, although Internet Explorer is also supported. Updates to the application are handled on the web server and are transparent to the users. If the update is particularly important, users can be notified either via system-wide emails or by viewing the “Recent Enhancements” area of the home page.

Security

Access to the application is controlled via user accounts. Potential institutions apply for an account for their institution via a publicly accessible web-based form. An email containing the information entered is then sent to the EAD application administrator for review and approval. The application administrator then adds the institution to the application, as well as adding an administrator account for the institution. The institution administrator is then contacted via their provided email address and provided with account credentials to access the application. From that point, the institution administrator can create new accounts for users within their institution.

The application implements Secure Socket Layer (SSL) on the web server, guaranteeing security and encryption of any data that passes between the client browser and the server-based application.

Architecture

The EAD application is written primarily using PHP and HTML. The user enters finding aid data into web-based forms, which then gets saved to various tables within a MySQL database. JavaScript is also used to support dynamic generation of fields and some screen-based validation.

Once a finding aid is completely entered into the tool, any further processing of the finding aid (uploading, validating, previewing, etc.) generally involves an intermediate step of creating an EAD-compliant XML-based document. This is accomplished by using a combination of PHP XML function calls and string concatenation to translate MySQL data into XML.

Validation of the finding aid is comprised of specific programmatic checks against the data, followed by verification against the EAD DTD [version 2002].

Previewing of the finding aid is handled by transforming the XML document into HTML via an XSL stylesheet.

A binary MARC record can also be automatically generated which can then be imported into your catalog or similar entity.

The process of submitting a finding aid is as follows:

1. The finding aid is converted into an EAD-compliant XML document, which is then copied to a “staging” area on the web server
2. A script runs each night which copies submitted finding aids to the OhioLINK Finding Aid Repository for public viewing
3. The submitted XML document is archived on the server.