Making the case for ArchivesSpace at the University of Auckland

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Our journey to ArchivesSpace really began with the Archivists' Toolkit and many of the arguments we used in support of the AT apply equally to ArchivesSpace.

The AT was essentially a prototype archival description and management system and AS has moved forward dramatically since the merger with Archon, especially with the release of the public interface.

So today I am going to take you through a quick timeline of our implementation of AT and AS and end with some conclusions and lessons which I hope you find useful for your situation.

At The University of Auckland, our main arguments for the adoption of the AT in 2010 were:

DLB Aug 2010 arguments – testing and proof of concept

Our existing systems were not purpose-built for archives, but were adapted from tools readily available in our environment. We used a variety of different systems to manage our collections, including DB/Textworks to manage accessioning and basic cataloguing, and Word documents for finding aids, so there was a great deal of transferring of data from one system to another, and the finding aids in particular were

labour-intensive to produce. There was incomplete adherence to archival standards.

A lack of local partners was also a driver. The two major research libraries in New Zealand and Archives New Zealand already had well-developed management and access systems in place. In Auckland, most of our fellow institutions were using more or less the same systems as us. So we needed to look beyond the local environment for improvements, especially when it came to providing a search platform across all the collections.

- Encoded Archival Description (EAD) was the other major draw card, offering collecting archives a recognized standard for archival description, which would improve access and promote sharing cataloguing data between institutions. Finding aids can be readily entered and converted to EAD, without extensive encoding
- open-source and free
- system conformed to archival standards: *Description of Archives : a content standard* which in turn supports ISAD(G)
- capable of importing records and EAD finding aids, and exporting EAD finding aids, MARCXML records, and METS, MODS and Dublin Core records. We were future-proofing our records
- respects the hierarchical nature of archival description successfully unlike library-based systems;
- can output into variety of formats including EAD and PDF
- handles digital objects
- can be customized for multiple repositories within system
- Potential for a discovery interface for all our archival collections.

2011: The results of our trial having proved successful, in mid-year 2011 we gained approval to proceed with full implementation of the AT,

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system adopted; meetings with key stakeholders: DS, archivists, cataloguers, digital development team (for Web)

The focus was then on migrating the legacy finding aids from Word and old typescript documents into the AT, which was really the most labour-intensive process of all. We gained support to hire two staff to convert around 300 legacy finding aids into the AT, ensuring that all our collections are discoverable online and this proved a major drawcard for users once the public interface of AS was released.

By 2013, The Archivists' Toolkit (AT) was fully integrated into the work processes of Special Collections and had proved its value in managing archival collections and publishing the finding aids which were accessible through the Library Catalogue.

Our next presentation to the DLB added to earlier arguments, now with the prospect of **AS on the horizon**:

- Brings together all information about our archival collections into one system

- to provide an efficient means of displaying metadata and finding aids, including digital objects, on the Web without extensive encoding into Encoded Archival Description (EAD) from scratch

- respects hierarchical nature of archives unlike MARC, or standard databases like DB/Textworks or Excel etc

- database structure conforms to archival standards

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- Handles digital objects

- Integrated into work processes for new collections and all ongoing management of collections and donors

- Training of staff and established manual and other documentation

- AS could offer a useful management tool for other collections managed by the Library eg AMPM.

- Cataloguing an integral part of the process (Anne Newnham)

- Provide support for divisional libraries using the system

- So, same arguments but now we had made progress with AT and discovery through collection records and finding aids on the library catalogue, our arguments I think carried more weight.

- Plus there was one big new drawcard – the prospect of a public interface which would mean that we wouldn't have to develop our own!

Open-source model has some advantages but sustainability, helper tools and full support are compelling arguments for membership. We became a member in the 'large' category in 2014

Over the next months there were further delays caused by lack of developer resources and other more urgent priority projects, so it wasn't until May 2016 that we implemented the AS backend.

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Having already implemented AT we were able to migrate our data to the AS relatively seamlessly and without too many importing errors, we worked with the AS from then on until the PUI had reached a stage we considered it viable for release.

The staff interface was upgraded in October 2017 and exactly a year later we released our beta version of the Public interface, which was then publicly released in February this year.

Arguments for AS which worked
- provides an effective public interface for discovery of archival collections
- improves efficiency - it integrates a range of description, indexing and collection management functions in one tool
- no local alternatives
- offers sustainability through a strong membership base and an actively developed application
- ability to contribute to development
- manages the hierarchical nature of archival description successfully unlike library-based systems;
- promotes data standardization through adherence to the descriptive metadata standard *Description of Archives : a content standard* which in turn supports ISAD(G) and ISAAR(CPF);
- supports the use of data value standards for subject headings, dates, languages, and other descriptive data;
- automates the creation of Encoded Archival Description (EAD) and Encoded Archival Context for Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families (EAC-CPF) records;
- supports exports into common data structure standards including EAD, MARCXML, Dublin Core, MODS, and METS.
- supports sharing of metadata through the Open Archives Initiative Protocol for Metadata Harvesting (OAI-PMH) protocol

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Key lessons

An important emerged during this journey, and that is *who* we were making to case to. In this case it was the Digital Library Board and the then University Librarian, Janet Copsey, who was the champion for the development of the digital library infrastructure at the UoA. Persuading the University Librarian of the value of a new archival system was absolutely essential for our success. The DLB was the key decision-making body for digital infrastructure, so representation on that was vital.

I was invited onto the Board once testing of AT got underway.

However, many other people will be required to assist in the implementation journey. Communication with a range of key stakeholders was therefore a major part of the implementation and involved, for example, discussions with digital services and cataloguing staff, presentations to library managers responsible for services to faculty and for collections, and library staff generally. We set up an ArchivesSpace Working Group in 2016 and ensured its minutes were circulated to the right people.

Developer and designer resources underpinned this project as the backend database had to be set up and managed by our applications support and development staff, so this group (IT support) was kept in close contact throughout the implementation process.

Developed stronger relationships with IT/developer staff, even if we differed as to the platform to achieve this. This resulted in an important data integration with the LLS homepage discovery layer.

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The project has raised the profile of our archives across the Library and beyond since we have many outside researchers interested in our collections.