**Retrospective Conversion of Paper Records for Selected Materials
Housed at The Cammie G. Henry Research Center Into MARC-AMC Format**

**Amigos Fellowship Final Report
April 2004**

Submitted by

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Overview

The archival staff of the Cammie G. Henry Research Center participated in this project to assist researchers in locating and accessing unique archival materials within the collection. To complete this project the Head Archivist and Assistant Archivist selected fifteen core archival collections for cataloging in MARC-AMC format. The documents cover a vast array of northwest Louisiana history including early French and Spanish Colonial settlement, as well as important twentieth century photography.

Training

Though the Head Archivist and Assistant Archivist have had some practical knowledge of MARC records, this is not something they deal with on a daily basis. As a result, they participated in training to help re-familiarize themselves with general procedures and guidelines for creating MARC records. During June 2002, the Head Archivist and Assistant Archivist (along with other library staff members) completed the online Amigos course *Introduction to MARC for Non-Catalogers*.

Because the production of MARC records for archival collections usually involves additional considerations than those in regular book cataloging, the Assistant Archivist sought more specialized training. In January 2003, the Assistant Archivist participated in a two-day Society of American Archivist-sponsored workshop in Austin, Texas entitled *Archival Cataloging as a Component of Description*. The trainers specialized in archival cataloging making the workshop relevant to the project. Each participant received a useful manual.

The Acting Head of Technical Processes participated in the third and final phase of training by taking the Amigos online course, *Authority File Fundamentals*. The course provided enhanced knowledge and skills for using OCLC Authority Files, an important tool for the use of inputting original catalog records. This was essential since the acting Head had minimal experience with original cataloging.

Information Gathering

The first step in gathering pertinent information involved the Assistant Archivist consulting with the Head Archivist on which particular collections to select as the core fifteen to be cataloged. The criteria used involved determining the importance of materials to potential researchers. Additionally, they also considered how well these materials related to holdings in other state institutions. Since one of the major objectives involved regional library cooperation by sharing information through the library's linked statewide consortium (LOUIS), the decisions made reflected this consideration.

Secondly, the archives staff gathered information on the individual collections (through finding aids, indexes, etc.) in order to prepare a MARC record template with adequate fields to cater to all possible information. Once the archives staff created the template, this same collection information was then examined in closer detail in order to add the specific field information.

Information Exchange and Cooperative Efforts

An important component of this project consisted of the exchange of information and cooperation among library staff. The Head Archivist gave the Assistant Archivist essential knowledge of the significance and provenance of the chosen collections. This mutual exchange of information benefited both parties and the project.

Archives and Technical Processes exchanged information and kept in close communication during the course of this project. Both departments initially met to see what possible questions or concerns the archivists (as non-catalogers) may need to address in our upcoming training. After the training, the two departments had a follow up meeting to further discuss our plan of action and the proposed workflow.

The two departments agreed on the following procedure: Upon completion of each MARC record, the Assistant Archivist consulted with the Head Archivist regarding the specific, raw information entered into the fields. This would help ensure accuracy of items such as dates, names and collection provenance. Once completed, the Assistant Archivist met with the Head of Technical Processes to discuss the issues pertaining to correct cataloging procedure. However, each new collection record often raised further questions regarding information and procedure, so the previous records were examined again and edited accordingly to ensure consistency.

Finally, once all records (still in template form) were checked and re-checked, they were put on a server in a shared file so that both departments had access to the records. At that point the Head of Technical Processes would again check for any possible procedural problems, and then load each record into OCLC. During this period, if any questions or comments about a particular record came up, both departments could discuss them more easily by looking at the same record through the shared file. If further discussion was needed, the two departments again met and reached an agreement.

Conclusion

All participants regard the project as successful. The actual loading of the records was finished efficiently and ahead of schedule. The participants also agree that all objectives of the proposal have been met. These include establishing beneficial cooperative efforts between library professionals, furthering our professional skills and knowledge and offering core materials of the center a needed technological component.

The participants have already witnessed some interlibrary researchers locate some of the selected collections through the completed online MARC records, indicating the practical use of the records. Participants expect this to continue as researchers statewide, nationwide and worldwide access the records. To document this potential success, six months from project completion (October 1, 2004), the archival staff will use evaluation forms to determine what percentage of researchers learned of our core collections through our online MARC records.