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Multidimensional Visualisation of Archival Finding Aids

As more archival finding aids, of increasing complexity, become available online the difficulty of seeing the 'wood from the trees' increases. This is particularly the case when these are implemented in EAD (Encoded Archival Description). In part, this is caused by the inherent difficulty of navigating hierarchical structures (the need go back up and across before you can go down again) but also a symptom of the lack of innovation in visualising archival information. This project, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, seeks to test a novel approach to structuring and visualising archival information by applying a novel visualisation interface to two existing EAD finding aids that have been transformed into Ted Nelson's ZigZag™ structure.

ZigZag structures finding aid content as a series of cells, these are then linked together to form dimensions (for example, function). As each cell can belong to more than one dimension this allows a visualisation that combines selected dimensions (for example files by functional activity), but also displays other available dimensions without cluttering users current view.

PROJECT

Academic field

Librarianship

Information & Museum Studies

Affiliation

University of Glasgow

Oxford Internet Institute

Project link

Multidimensional Visualisation of Archival Finding Aids

Funders

Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)

ARTS-HUMANITIES.NET

Principal investigator

Dr Ian Anderson

Principal project staff

Dr Ian Anderson

Start date

Thursday, June 1, 2006

Completion date

Friday, June 1, 2007

Era

Modern

Source material

The digital resources were derived from two main sources - the Gateway to Archives of Scottish Higher Education (GASHE) finding aid and the Navigational Aids for the History of Science Technology (NAHSTE) finding aid. Both fiding aids were used at the conceptual mapping stage but only a sample of GASHE for the final data source. Use was also made of an earlier XML implementation of ZigZag by Les Carr at the University of Southampton

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