



Committee on Best Practices and Standards / Sub-committee on archival description
Comité des normes et des bonnes pratiques / Sous-comité des normes de description

Progress report for revising and harmonising ICA descriptive standards

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1. Background

During the 16th International Congress on Archives at Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia), 2008, the Committee of Best Practices and Standards (ICA/CBPS) decided to develop a compendium of the international descriptive standards developed by ICA. The compendium should include additions (such as a common area for the control of archival descriptions) and a focused description of the relationships between the different types of archival entities. A full review of all standards was recommended to be undertaken after the 17th International Congress on Archives.

The goals of this compendium should be:

- to explain to the professional community how the four ICA standards relate to one another as a unique set of standards that together will produce archival descriptions that will make records accessible;
- to ensure the creation of consistent, appropriate and self-explanatory descriptions, and therefore to provide elements to describe the different types of archival entities and their relationships at particular points of time, or over time;
- to make possible the integration of descriptions from different repositories into a unified system and to facilitate the retrieval and exchange of information about archival material;
- to create and share a common understanding of the structure, content and intended uses of standards and formats, in order to promote consistent use of the standards;
- to enable archivists to better understand their areas of knowledge and to promote a dialogue with other professionals.

The Committee completed a first draft document at its meetings in Marburg (Germany) and in Paris (France) in May 2009 and in May 2010. This draft and its objectives were discussed in Bucharest (Romania) in May 2011. Was the compendium intended to replace the 4 ICA standards as a new standard? Or should it be only a new 'render' of the standards with a few additions? Though more substantial changes of ICA standards were postponed after 2012, having the 4 standards together in a single document led already to significant changes (e.g. grouping ISAAR and ISDF chapters 6 on relationships, merging the description control areas of the four standards, introducing new concepts ...).

So, CBPS decided to prepare, for the 17th International Congress on Archives, at Brisbane (Australia), 2012, a draft of a common chapter to be included in all 4 ICA standards on relationships between different types of archival entities, as well as the present progress report which is intended to focus on improving the consistency between the content of the standards in their current versions and the main directions of future revisions.

2. Prefaces, Introductions, Scope and Purpose Sections

Currently each of the standards contains a preface which appears to contain information about the development and approval processes of subsequent editions of the standard, as well as, in some cases, information about the purpose of the standard itself. One option for streamlining the standards would be to create a common preface for all four standards. A part of this could include removing information on the process of standards development and approval. This could be used to develop a historical document on the ICA standards-related activities which would be very useful for the ICA as well as students of archival science. This information is not

germane to the application of the standards themselves and will need to be updated each time revisions are made.

Also, currently some of the standards have an Introduction, while others have Scope and Purpose sections. One option would be to create a General Introduction for all the standards and to create 1. Scope and Purpose for each of them as well. Information common to all standards could go in the General Introduction, whereas information specific to each standard could be located in 1. Scope and Purpose.

Draft of General Introduction

1. Archival description: definition, purpose and principles

The purpose of archival description is to identify and explain the context and content of archival material in order to promote its accessibility and use. This is achieved by creating accurate and appropriate representations by capturing, analysing, organising and recording information about archival material and the contexts of its creation, maintenance, use and custody.

Relationships among the records are the primary context of archives and must be preserved and made explicit in archival descriptions in order to understand and interpret the records and to maintain their evidential value over the time. This is prescribed by generally accepted theoretical assumptions as the principle of the *respect des fonds* and that archival description must reflect physical or intellectual arrangement.

Other entities besides records are part of the context of archival material. The most important of those entities are corporate bodies, persons and families who, performing functions, created, maintained, used and kept custody of records. Linking the descriptions of archival material to the description of relevant CPF and functions is an essential component of the archival tasks. Other significant relationships can be established among all those entities and between them and other information resources. This can be achieved by building archival descriptive systems which describe separately each entity and allow for their linking.

2. Archival descriptive systems

With the advent of the networking environment, users have more opportunity to access online catalogues and archival information systems describing records held by a number of different institutions with archival holdings. This fact increased the need for consistent and comprehensive archival descriptive systems.

An archival descriptive system is an information system containing archival descriptions that includes the description of records, corporate bodies, persons and families, and functions or, broadly speaking, the context of records creation. It comprises all types of finding aids, analog or digital, that constitute a coherent system enabling users to locate, identify, access and use archival materials.

Specifically, the goals of developing an archival descriptive system are to:

- Assist users in discovering and understanding the context and content of archival materials that may relate to their research, legal, or administrative needs.
- Document history of the records and the chain of custody over the life of the materials as a factor in establishing the authenticity of the records as evidence.
- Aid archivists in managing the records themselves by documenting a range of

administrative and operational functions such as the transfer of legal custody, the physical location of the materials, work processes such as the conservation, digitisation, and arrangement of the records, and the tracking of their use.

- Make archivists accountable for performing their legal and social mandates with respect to the custody, preservation, security, and accessibility of archival materials.

The four ICA standards describe the core of a descriptive system in which different contextual descriptions are created and maintained independently but linked together in a manner that is essentially transparent to the user. When these standards are used together within the context of an archival descriptive system or network, descriptions of records will be linked to descriptions of archives and to authority records of corporate bodies, persons and families, and descriptions of functions, and vice versa.

3. Benefits of Standardised archival description

Applying standards for archival description enables archives to present their holdings in a consistent manner and build a system of relationships which will comprise a fully developed archival descriptive system.

Only standardised archival description enables the interchange of descriptive information among systems and thus gives archives all over the world the opportunities to participate in archival and intercultural portals.

Using standards in the process of archival description promotes better professional work, offers managerial benefits, encourages best practices by archives and supports the training of archivists.

Descriptive standards help to improve the consistency of descriptive practice. Their use also allows to create information systems across archives which facilitate the research of users in the best possible way.

Therefore ICA decided in 1989 to develop international descriptive standards, publishing ISAD(G) in 1994, ISAAR in 1996 and – after their revisions in 2000 resp. 2004 – ISDF and ISDIAH in 2008.

ISAD(G) encompasses the core principles of archival description, as e.g. the multilevel description rules. ISAAR (CPF) incorporates the concept of authority records into archival description and offers a set of elements tailored to the needs of archival description. ISDF aims to preserve another core element of original context describing functions performed by corporate bodies. This is important mainly when authority records are not sufficient to provide the necessary contextual information. ISDIAH as a complementary standard to ISAAR (CPF) provides guidance to prepare descriptions of institutions keeping archival holdings, which is essential for the identification, localisation and the access to archives. The four ICA standards are linked together as described in this compendium.

The use of all of the four ICA standards enhances the functionality of any archival descriptive system. Their implementation ensures that any relevant elements of information about archival material are recorded at any phase of the management of archives, their holders, their context and the information itself.

The use of ICA standards improves the application of standards for communication and format

exchanges such as EAD, EAC-CPF and EAG as a working instrument in general compliance with the set of descriptive elements presented in ISDIAH. Applying ICA standards is the best way to easily exchange descriptive data contained in specific types of finding-aids and/or authority records using EAD and EAC-CPF - thus creating the basis for online presentation of descriptive information in a structured meaningful form for the users and making the utmost benefits of the web.

3. Related Standards and Guidelines

ISAAR(CPF), ISDF and ISDIAH each have a section 2. Related Standards and Guidelines. These might also be combined into a single description of related standards to avoid redundancy. This could follow after a General Introduction.

4. Glossary

Currently each of the standards has a glossary, and often single terms are not defined consistently across each. One common glossary would be beneficial and would eliminate the need to populate revisions to terms across multiple standards over time.

Terms common to all standards:

Archival description
Authority record
Qualifier

Unique terms:

There are only two truly unique terms, but these seem suitable to include in a common glossary.
Institution with archival holdings – ISDIAH
Function - ISDF

Terms in ISAD(G):

These terms would seem applicable to all standards although they only feature currently in ISAD(G).

Access
Accrual
Appraisal
Arrangement
Author
Collection
Custody
Document
File
Finding aid
Fonds
Form
Formal title
Item
Level of description
Medium
Series

Sub-fonds
Supplied title
Title
Unit of description

* Note: The ISAD(G) definition for 'Authority control' is a see reference for ISAAR(CPF), but the term in ISAAR(CPF) is 'Authority record'. Either this term could be deleted from the glossary, or a new definition created for it.

Terms appearing in more than one standard where the definition is inconsistent:

These definition should be reviewed.

Access point – ISAD(G); ISAAR(CPF)

Corporate body - ISAD(G); ISAAR(CPF) & ISDF

Creator - ISAD(G); ISAAR(CPF) & ISDF & ISDIAH

Provenance – ISAD(G) & ISAAR(CPF); ISDF

Record - ISAD(G); ISAAR(CPF) & ISDF

Draft of glossary

The following glossary with terms and their definitions has been formed by adopting already existing definitions from the existing four standards.

Access. The ability to make use of material from a fonds, usually subject to rules and conditions.

Access point. A name, term, keyword, phrase or code that may be used to search, identify and locate an archival description, an authority record describing a corporate body, a person or a family, or a description of function.

Accrual. An acquisition additional to a unit of description already held by a repository.

Appraisal. The process of determining the retention period of records.

Archival description. The creation of an accurate representation of a unit of description and its component parts, if any, by capturing, analysing, organising and recording information that serves to identify, manage, locate and explain archival materials and the context and records systems which produced it. This term also describes the products of the process.

Arrangement. The intellectual and physical processes and results of analysing and organising documents in accordance with archival principles.

Author. The individual or corporate body responsible for the intellectual content of a document. Not to be confused with creators of records.

Authority record. The authorised form of name combined with other information elements that identify and describe the named entity and may also point to other related authority records.

Collection. An artificial assemblage of documents accumulated on the basis of some common characteristic without regard to the provenance of those documents. Not to be confused with an archival fonds.

Corporate body. An organisation or group of persons that is identified by a particular name and that acts, or may act, as an entity. Also includes an individual acting in a corporate capacity.

Creator. The corporate body, family or person that created, accumulated and/or maintained records in the conduct of personal or corporate activity. Not be confused with collector.

Custody. The responsibility for the care of documents based on their physical possession. Custody does not always include legal ownership or the right to control access to records.

Document. Recorded information regardless of medium or characteristics. (See also Record.)

File. An organised unit of documents grouped together either for current use by the creator or in the process of archival arrangement, because they relate to the same subject, activity, or transaction. A file is usually the basic unit within a record series.

Finding aid. The broadest term to cover any description or means of reference made or received by an archives service in the course of establishing administrative or intellectual control over archival material.

Fonds. The whole of the records, regardless of form or medium, organically created and/or accumulated and used by a particular person, family, or corporate body in the course of that creator's activities and functions.

Form. A class of documents distinguished on the basis of common physical (e.g., water colour, drawing) and/or intellectual (e.g., diary, journal, day book, minute book) characteristics of a document.

Formal title. A title which appears prominently on or in the archival material being described.

Function. Any high level purpose, responsibility or task assigned to the accountability agenda of a corporate body by legislation, policy or mandate. Functions may be decomposed into sets of coordinated operations such as sub-functions, business processes, activities, tasks or transactions.

Institution with archival holdings. An organisation which keeps and preserves archival material and makes it accessible to the public.

Item. The smallest intellectually indivisible archival unit, e.g., a letter, memorandum, report, photograph, sound recording.

Level of description. The position of the unit of description in the hierarchy of the fonds.

Medium. The physical material, container, and/or carrier in or on which information is recorded (i.e., clay tablet, papyrus, paper, parchment, film, magnetic tape).

Provenance. The relationship between records and the organisations or individuals that created, accumulated and/or maintained and used them in the conduct of personal or corporate activity. Provenance is also the relationship between records and the functions which generated the need of the records.

Qualifier. Information added to a descriptive element that assists identification, understanding

and/or use of the description or of the authority record.

Record. Recorded information in any form or medium, created or received and maintained, by an organisation or person in the transaction of business or the conduct of affairs.

Series. Documents arranged in accordance with a filing system or maintained as a unit because they result from the same accumulation or filing process, or the same activity; have a particular form; or because of some other relationship arising out of their creation, receipt, or use. A series is also known as a records series.

Sub-fonds. A subdivision of a fonds containing a body of related records corresponding to administrative subdivisions in the originating agency or organisation or, when that is not possible, to geographical, chronological, functional, or similar groupings of the material itself. When the creating body has a complex hierarchical structure, each sub-fonds has as many subordinate sub-fonds as are necessary to reflect the levels of the hierarchical structure of the primary subordinate administrative unit.

Supplied title. A title supplied by the archivist for a unit of description which has no formal title.

Title. A word, phrase, character, or group of characters that names a unit of description.

Unit of description. A document or set of documents in any physical form, treated as an entity, and as such, forming the basis of a single description.

5. Structure and Use

All standards except ISAD(G) have section 4. Structure and Use. This section could be added to ISAD(G), and current sections 1. Multilevel description; and 2. Multilevel description rules, could be folded into 4. Structure and Use. Some of the information in the current ISAD(G) Introduction could also be moved to 4. Structure and Use (e.g., I.6, I.8, I.11-13).

If both Scope and Purpose and Structure and Use sections are to be retained/created for all four standards it would seem valuable to carefully review the content of each of these to ensure that information for each standard is located in the proper section, and that each of the sections is as concise as possible.

6. Harmonisation of titles in section 5

The names of some descriptive elements (particularly between ISAAR, ISDF and ISDIAH) should be homogenised.

Added text is underlined and deleted text is ~~crossed~~.

ISAAR(CPF)	ISDF	ISDIAH
5.1.1. Type of entity	5.1.1. Type	5.1.5. Type of institution with archival holdings
5.1.2. <u>Authorised</u> authorized form(s) of name	5.1.2. Authorised form(s) of name	5.1.2. Authorised form(s) of name
5.1.3. Parallel form(s) of	5.1.3. Parallel form(s) of	5.1.3. Parallel form(s) of name

name	name	
5.1.4. Standardised forms of name according to other rules	-	-
5.1.5. Other form(s) of name	5.1.4. Other form(s) of name	5.1.4. Other form(s) of name
5.1.6. Identifiers for corporate bodies	-	-
-	5.1.5. Classification	
-	-	5.2.1. Location and address(es)
-	-	5.2.2. Telephone, fax, email
-	-	5.2.3. Contact persons
-	-	
5.2.1. Dates of existence	5.2.1. Dates	
	5.2.2. Description	
5.2.2. History	5.2.3. History	5.3.1. History of the institution with archival holdings
5.2.3. Places	-	-
5.2.4. Legal status	-	-
5.2.5. Functions, occupations and activities	-	-
5.2.6. Mandates/Sources of authority		5.3.3. Mandates/Sources of authority
	5.2.4. Legislation This element is not entirely of the same nature as 'Mandates/Sources of authority' in ISAAR(CPF) and ISDIAH. In the latter two standards the element refers to a physical entity (i.e., corporate body, person, family, repository). In ISDF the element is referring to legislation mandating an action of a physical entity.	
5.2.7. Internal structures/ Genealogy <i>Purpose: To describe and/or represent the internal administrative...</i>	-	5.3.4. Internal Administrative structure <i>Purpose: To describe and/or represent the current administrative...</i>
5.2.8. General Context	-	5.3.2. Geographical and cultural Context
-	-	5.3.5. Records management and collecting policies
-	-	5.3.6. Building(s)
-	-	5.3.7. Archival and other holdings
-	-	5.3.8. Finding aids, guides and publications
-	-	5.4.1. Opening times
-	-	5.4.2. Conditions and requirements for access and use

-	-	5.4.3. Accessibility
-	-	5.5.1. Research services
-	-	5.5.2. Reproduction services
-	-	5.5.3. Public areas
5.3.1. <u>Authorised form(s) of names/identifiers</u> of related corporate bodies, persons or families	5.3.1. Authorised form(s) of name/identifier of the related functions <i>Purpose:</i> To provide the authorised form(s) of name and any unique identifier of the related functions. <i>Rule:</i> Record the authorised form(s) of name and any unique identifier of the related functions.	-
	5.3.2. Type	-
5.3.2. Category of relationship	5.3.3. Category of relationship <i>Purpose:</i> To identify the general category of relationship between the function <u>being described</u> and the related function.	-
5.3.3. Description of relationship	5.3.4. Description of relationship <i>Rule:</i> Record a precise description of the nature of the relationship between the function <u>being described</u> and the related function.	-
5.3.4. Dates of the relationship	5.3.5. Dates of relationship <i>Purpose:</i> To indicate the dates of duration of the relationship of the function with the related function.	-
5.4.1. Authority record identifier	5.4.1. Function Description identifier	5.6.1. Description identifier
5.4.2. Institution identifiers	5.4.2. Institution identifiers	5.6.2. Institution identifiers
5.4.3. Rules and/or conventions <u>used</u>	5.4.3. Rules and/or conventions used	5.6.3. Rules and/or conventions used
5.4.4. Status	5.4.4. Status	5.6.4. Status
5.4.5. Level of detail	5.4.5. Level of detail	5.6.5. Level of detail
5.4.6. Dates of creation, revision or deletion	5.4.6. Dates of creation, revision or deletion	5.6.6. Dates of creation, revision or deletion
5.4.7. Language(s) and script(s)	5.4.7. Language(s) and script(s)	5.6.7. Language(s) and script(s)
5.4.8. Sources	5.4.8. Sources	5.6.8. Sources
5.4.9. Maintenance notes	5.4.9. Maintenance notes	5.6.9. Maintenance notes

Moreover, while creator and custodian roles differ, a significant number of elements are valid for both. This suggests the possibility of revising ISAAR(CPF) to integrate elements unique to the custodial role, and to provide guidance on the choice of these elements. As an example, the

scope of ISAAR(CPF) Description Area could be extended to accommodate elements from ISDIAH Contact, Access and Services Areas.

Lastly, the Control area should be common to the four standards. The Control area of ISAD(G) should be extended and homogenised with the Control areas of ISAAR(CPF), ISDF and ISDIAH, as it was already done in ICA-AtOM.

Draft of common Control area

1 Description identifier

Purpose:

To identify the description uniquely within the context in which it will be used.

Rule:

Record a unique description identifier in accordance with local and/or national conventions. If the description is to be used internationally, record the code of the country in which the description was created in accordance with the latest version of ISO 3166 - *Codes for the representation of names of countries*. Where the creator of the description is an international organisation, give the organisational identifier in place of the country code.

2 Institution identifiers

Purpose:

To identify the agency(ies) responsible for the description.

Rule:

Record the full authorised form of name(s) of the agency(ies) responsible for creating, modifying or disseminating the description or, alternatively, record a code for the agency in accordance with the national or international agency code standard.

3 Rules and/or conventions used

Purpose:

To identify the national or international conventions or rules applied in creating the description.

Rule:

Record the names, and, where useful, the edition or publication dates of the conventions or rules applied. Specify, separately, which rules have been applied for creating the Authorised form(s) of name of a creator, of a function or of an institution with archival holdings. Include reference to any system(s) of dating used to identify dates in this description (e.g. ISO 8601).

4. Status

Purpose:

To indicate the drafting status of the description so that users can understand the current status of the description.

Rule:

Record the current status of the description, indicating whether it is a draft, finalised and/or revised or deleted.

5	<p>Dates of creation, revision or deletion</p> <p><i>Purpose:</i> To indicate when the description was created, revised or deleted.</p> <p><i>Rule:</i> Record the date the description was created and the dates of any revisions to the description. Specify in the Rules and/or conventions element (XXX) the system(s) of dating used, e.g. ISO 8601.</p>
6	<p>Level of detail</p> <p><i>Purpose:</i> To indicate whether the description applies a minimal, partial or a full level of detail.</p> <p><i>Rule:</i> Record whether the description consists of a minimal, partial or full level of detail in accordance with relevant international and/or national guidelines and/or rules. In the absence of national guidelines or rules, minimal descriptions are those that consist only of the essential elements of ICA standards compliant descriptions, while full descriptions are those that convey information for all relevant ICA standards elements of description.</p>
7	<p>Language(s) and script(s)</p> <p><i>Purpose:</i> To indicate the language(s) and/or script(s) used to create the description.</p> <p><i>Rule:</i> Record the language(s) and/or script(s) of the description. Include the appropriate ISO codes for languages (ISO 639-2 - <i>Codes for the representation of names of languages</i>) and/or scripts (ISO 15924 - <i>Codes for the representation of names of scripts</i>).</p>
8	<p>Sources</p> <p><i>Purpose:</i> To indicate the sources consulted in creating the description.</p> <p><i>Rule:</i> Record the sources consulted in establishing the description.</p>
9	<p>Maintenance notes</p> <p><i>Purpose:</i> To document the creation of and changes to the description.</p> <p><i>Rule:</i> Record notes pertinent to the creation and maintenance of the description. For example, the names of persons responsible for creating and/or revising the description may be recorded.</p>

7. Harmonisation of the three section 6's (ISAAR(CPF); ISDF; ISDIAH)

ISAD(G) doesn't include any chapter about the relationships between archival materials, their creators, the functions fulfilled by the creators and institutions with archival holdings; ISAAR includes a chapter about the relationships between corporate bodies, persons or families and archival materials or other resources; ISDF includes a chapter about how relating functions to corporate bodies, archival materials and other resources; lastly, ISDIAH includes a chapter

about how relating descriptions of institutions with archival holdings to archival materials and their creators.

In addition, ISAAR and ISDF include schemas about the relationships between archival materials, records creators and functions, but not ISDIAH.

Lastly, we should explain how the standards fit together. For example, you can only use ISAD(G), but if you use ISAD(G) in conjunction with ISAAR, the Administrative / Biographical history element of ISAD(G) becomes useless because the description of the records creator is managed by ISAAR; ISAAR can be used to structure the information contained in the Administrative / Biographical history element of ISAD(G) or to create separate authority records; if you use ISAD(G) in conjunction with ISAAR and ISDF, the Functions, occupations and activities element of ISAAR is not to be used because the description of functions is managed by ISDF; the same situation occurs with many of the elements in ISAAR(CPF) and ISDIAH given that they both describe actors (see above). In addition, you can use another standard to enhance or improve a description; for instance, ISAD(G) does not offer full information related to the biography or administrative history as ISAAR(CPF) can do.

So, CBPS prepared a draft of common chapter on relationships between different types of archival entities and also on relationships of archival authority records, descriptions of functions and archival descriptions to other relevant external information resources not covered by an archival descriptive system.

Only 3 descriptive elements were made available to establish links between archival entities and between archival entities and other information resources: “Identifier of related entities and resources”, “Nature of relationship” and “Dates of relationship”.

Moreover, 2 diagrams were drafted to provide visual support and representation of the relationships between ICA descriptive standards and archival entities represented by their descriptions. It is intended that these diagrams do not include all the possible relationships but only those relevant for the purpose of the draft. The diagram 1 represents the relationships between the four ICA standards. The diagram 2 represents the relationships between archival entities (it was suggested to include archival institutions into CPF).

The draft also provides examples of relationships:

- 2 examples (in French and Spanish) of relationships between a series, a corporate body, a function and an institution with archival holdings;
- 1 example (in French) between a function and corporate bodies and a external resource.

All examples are presented in the following way:

MANDATORY ELEMENTS *(for an archival description)*

Reference code(s)	
Title	
Date(s)	
Level of description	
Extent and medium	

RELATIONSHIPS AREA

Identifier/Name	Nature/Description	Date

8. Developing a more consistent archival conceptual model

ICA/CBPS is aware that the only way to eliminate the redundancy in the suite of standards would be to first develop a conceptual model and then to go back to the rules and identify those unique and shared elements based on all potential relationships. Whether archivists end up using the suite of standards within the context of an archival information system, or in the creation of finding aids and other reference tools, the development of a conceptual model or schema for the entities of archival description would surely be beneficial. It could help archivists to solve the issues raised by the combination of descriptive standards in an archival descriptive system, as some elements for the links are missing, the entities to be included in a system are not so clear, etc.

In the next term 2012-2016, the priorities could be the following:

- to develop a single reference model for descriptive standards, enabling archivists to describe different types of archival entities (archival materials, corporate bodies, persons or families, and functions) and to document these entities in relationship to each other at particular points of time, or over time;
- to resolve confusion between identity and designation; for instance, the Identity area of ISAAR(CPF) includes elements specifying the type of the entity described (corporate body, person or family) and others containing the different forms of names of the entity;
- to clarify key concepts such as 'Fonds', 'Mandate', 'Function', 'Levels of description';
- to look at the conceptual relationships behind ICA standards, in order to facilitate interchange of archival, bibliographic and museum information.

The use of existing archival conceptual models will be considered, such as, for instance, the logical object model implemented in ICA-AtoM. This model is documented in ICA-AtoM user manual, including a basic concept diagram (see <http://ica-atom.org/docs/index.php?title=UM-1.3>):

- The relationship between Archival Materials (ISAD) and Actors is captured in a separate 'Event' entity (similar to the 'Business' entity in the Australian metadata model). This formalises the role of 'acts', 'transactions', 'business processes', etc. in a conceptual model (rather than being lost in a weak link directly between an archival description and authority record). It also provides the opportunity to create relationships other than those based on a creation event (e.g. publication, custody). The Event entity has start and end dates so that it can be used to create a chronology of events as it relates to a fonds or item of archival material (e.g. custodial history).
- Functions described using ISDF can be used to classify Events. For example, the Event entity records when a document was created, a link from the Event entity to the ISAAR authority record indicates which Actor (person/organisation/family) created it, a link from the Event entity to the ISAD record describes the document and its context, a link from the Event entity to the ISDF record classifies what type of act the Event is in relation to the organisation's functions (e.g. the Event is an 'instance' of the function described in the ISDF record).

- An archival institution (ISDIAH) is a type of Actor (ISAAR). It inherits all the applicable fields from the Actor's authority record (e.g. Authorised Form of Name, History, etc.) and extends the repository-specific fields (e.g. opening hours, research services, etc) in an ISDIAH record.