

Toward a National Archival Finding Aid Network: a Planning Initiative

Summary and Vision

Many archival description aggregators across the country struggle to find sufficient resources to update their platforms and to engage with some of the most promising advances in the field. This planning initiative aims to tackle these challenges by exploring the creation of a national archival finding aid network that could fundamentally transform the archival description landscape while continuing to serve the needs of aggregators and archival repositories. By pooling resources and establishing co-development partnerships, we believe we can address our individual challenges collectively, thereby extending the capabilities, breadth, and depth of existing aggregations. Together we can provide users with more meaningful and richer access to archival records than any one of us can alone.

With crucial funding support from the US Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) under the provisions of the [Library Services and Technology Act \(LSTA\)](#), administered in California by the State Librarian, we are embarking on a one-year collaborative planning initiative (October 2018 – September 2019) with the following key objectives:

- **Identify key challenges** facing finding aid aggregators.
- **Uncover and validate high-level stakeholder (archivists, researchers, etc.) requirements and needs** for finding aid aggregations.
- **Explore the possibilities of shared infrastructure and services** among current finding aid aggregators, to test the theory that collaboration will benefit our organizations, our contributors, and our end users. If so, identify potential shared infrastructure and service models.
- **Determine if there is collective interest and capacity to collaborate** on developing shared infrastructure.
- **Develop a concrete action plan for next steps** based on the shared needs, interests and available resources within the community of finding aid aggregators. Discussions of viable collaboration models and sustainability strategies will be included.

Developing a collective understanding of requirements and challenges is a necessary first step for establishing the trajectory of any future finding aid aggregation effort. We hope this planning initiative will move us beyond that analysis to the common goal of developing a robust, sustainable, shared infrastructure to leverage the advances in archival description that promise to enhance research and discovery in the future.

"Toward a National Archival Finding Aid Network" is a project supported by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA), administered in California by the State Librarian