Library-led team completes transition to Archives at Yale

January 8, 2019

The four-month transition to the powerful new Archives at Yale discovery tool was completed this week as staff disconnected the old Yale Finding Aid Database (YFAD) system. Archives at Yale is now the primary resource for searching within and across more than 5,000 collections held in ten Yale library and museum repositories.

Archives at Yale, Yale's version of the open-source Archives Space web application, was introduced in early September. For the first few months, it ran in parallel with the legacy YFAD system, allowing researchers to explore the new tool and giving library staff the opportunity to de-bug and finetune the interface in response to users' experience and feedback.

The choice of a popular open-source web application means that Yale's investment in developing the tool will benefit other libraries and museums around the world.

The library-led Yale project team conducted extensive user testing to make searching more intuitive and accessible. Collection finding aids—written descriptions of collection contents— were enhanced and standardized to address elements like inconsistent date formats and name variations that can trip up search tools and prevent relevant items from surfacing. Another important innovation is the ability to limit searches to a date range, thus screening out irrelevant results. Additionally, when material on a research topic is spread across multiple

collections, Archives at Yale can often point users to folders within collections, and sometimes even items within a folder, rather than just to the collections.

"Doing archival research can be a bit of a treasure hunt, when materials are buried in big collections with lengthy finding aids," said E?ve Bourbeau-Allard, processing archivist at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. "This saves a lot of time and makes the results less opaque, like lifting a veil."

Access the Archives at Yale tool at archives.yale.edu.

Source URL:https://web.library.yale.edu/news/2019/01/library-led-team-completes-transition-archives-yale