

Presentation

Identifier Usage and Maintenance in the UNT Libraries' Digital Collections

Hannah Tarver University of North Texas Libraries, U.S.A. hannah.tarver@unt.edu	Mark Phillips University of North Texas Libraries, U.S.A. mark.phillips@unt.edu
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Abstract

At the University of North Texas (UNT) Libraries we work with a large number of identifiers in relation to our Digital Collections (The Portal to Texas History, the UNT Digital Library, and the Gateway to Oklahoma History). Since our Digital Collections comprise items from other library and campus departments, as well as a large number of cultural heritage institutions across Texas and Oklahoma, many of the materials have assigned identifiers that are important to the group that owns the physical materials. We document any relevant identifiers in each item's metadata record, whether they belong to an international or established standard (e.g., ISSNs or call numbers) or have a specific context (e.g., agency-assigned report numbers).

Most discrete collections have partner-assigned identifiers that range from established accession numbers to sequentially-assigned numbers; these identifiers allow for a connection between a digital item in the public interface, copies of the associated digital files, and the physical object. To ensure that identifiers are unique within the Digital Collections, we routinely add codes that identify the partner institution at the front of each identifier, separated with an underscore (e.g., GEPFP_62-1). This makes it relatively easy to distinguish the original identifier from the code that we have added, but also prevents the inclusion of several hundred items identified as "0005" if a user wants to use an identifier to search for a particular object.

Internally, our digital infrastructure uses ARK (Archival Resource Key) identifiers to track and connect archival copies of files stored in our Coda repository with web-derivative copies in our Aubrey access system. We also currently use PURLs (Permanent Uniform Resource Locators) to identify and manage controlled vocabulary terms. For name authority, we create local authority records that act similarly to item records in terms of identifiers: each record has a system-unique identifier that generates a stable URL, but contains a field to include alternate established identifiers (e.g., ISNIs, VIAF record numbers, ORCIDs, etc.) that also refer to the entity, when applicable.

This presentation will discuss some of the complexities inherent in managing both locally-created and externally-assigned identifiers, why we use different types of identifiers throughout our infrastructure, and the implementation of various identifiers in our Digital Collections.