

# Building Trust and Transparency into Finding Aid Auditing

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The CCA is an international architecture research institution and museum located in Montréal, Canada.

As archives and the way they are described can no longer be considered neutral, the CCA undertook a project of reparative descriptions for its archival collection. Part of this is the Finding Aid Audit project.

The Finding Aid Audit aims to:

- Identify and locate problematic and harmful language in the CCA's existing archival finding aids;
- Identify contextualization issues that could lead to harm;
- Uncover gaps or absence in the finding aids.

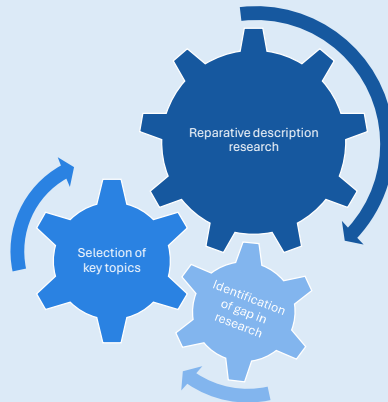
Ultimately, the goal of the finding aid audit is to find issues in our descriptive metadata that could discourage or restraint access to the information held in our records, and help build trust with our users. We also wish to share the knowledge we gathered during this process as well as the tools and documentation created with our users or other archival holdings who would be interested in revising their own collection descriptions.

## Skill acquisition through literature review

The Finding Aid Audit project started with a research and reading phase to gather knowledge on reparative descriptions, finding aid audits in other institutions, and how archives can help social justice through access and more inclusive descriptive standards.

### What were we looking for:

- Webinars, conferences, texts from archival or professional associations.
- Academic texts on information science and archival practices.
- Texts and webinars from associations from or for marginalized or racialized communities.
- Documentation or texts on similar projects by other institutions.
- Tools for automated audit of our finding aids and other related database records for our archival holdings.



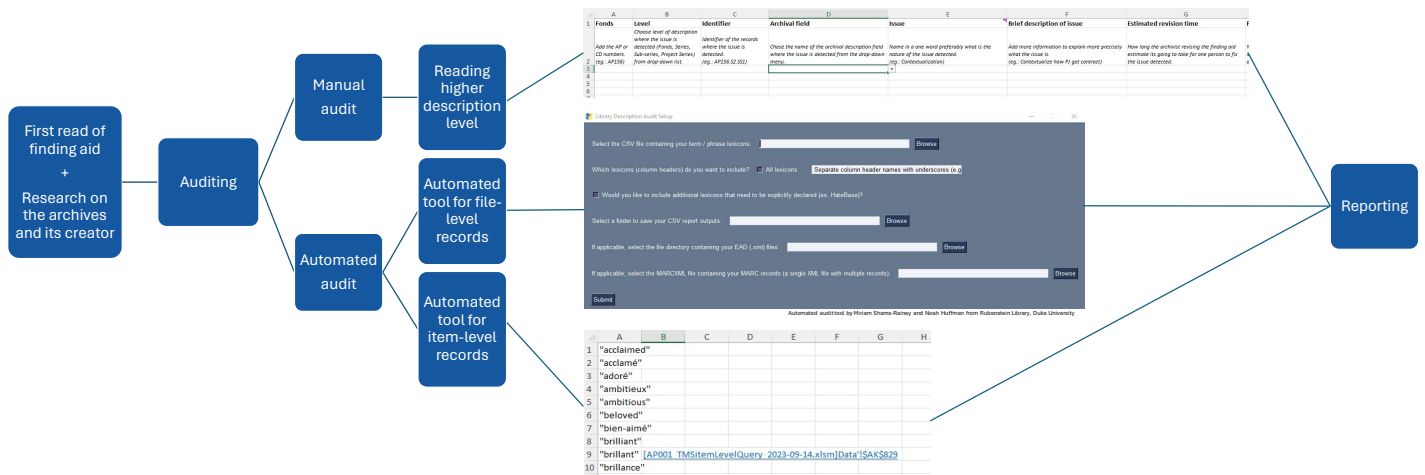
### Resources selection:

1. Research of more general literature on reparative description and social justice in archives.
2. Select key topics to research more in detail, for example trauma in archives, content warning, community and people-based approach in archival description.
3. Identification of gaps in research where we are lacking information and searching for resources on those specific subjects.

### Knowledge sharing across the team and the CCA:

- Reading club on rethinking or challenging archival standards and practice.
- Using institution's online platform for internal communication for group discussions, brainstorming on reparative descriptions, and resources exchange.
- Sharing draft audit workflow with the team for feedback and improvements.

## Tools and audit workflow



## Outcomes and relationship-building

As the Finding Aid Audit project is still going, some outcomes of it has already started in our online finding aids and CCA's collection web pages:

- Statement describing the reparative description process at CCA and the Finding Aid Audit project.
- Content warning.
- Statement to the effect that finding aids are not a finish product and should be open to changes and improvements.
- Statement to welcome the user's comments and their help to improve our descriptions.

Planned outcomes of the Finding Aid Audit project:

- Revise our standards according to knowledge acquired during the research phase and what we've observed during our audit of finding aids.
- Establishing a recurring process of finding aid audits for the future.
- Identifying stakeholders of the records in our archival holdings.

Planned knowledge sharing and relationship building outcomes of the Finding Aid Audit project:

- Sharing resources and tools with other working groups across the CCA doing similar inclusivity and transparency work.
- Sharing tools and documentation created with other archival holdings and museums, including workflow and decision logs, through content sharing platforms.
- Presenting the project in conferences.
- Contact with communities concerned by our record to build relation and improve their access to our records.
- Write articles for CCA website presenting the Finding Aid Audit process to our users.

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For more information about the CCA: <https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/>  
Questions or suggestions? Contact [cjacob@cca.qc.ca](mailto:cjacob@cca.qc.ca)