

A grayscale photograph of a person with dark hair, wearing a light-colored shirt, leaning over a table. They are using a brush to write on a large scroll of paper. The scroll has some characters and a large arrow pointing to the right. In the foreground, there is a palette with various colors of ink or paint, and a small bowl. The background is slightly blurred, showing some papers and a lamp. The entire image is framed by a thick black L-shaped border on the left and bottom sides.

BASICS OF FINDING AIDS

Cate Putirskis

Ohio State University Libraries

Overview

- What a finding aid is & is used for
- Best practices for writing finding aids
- Anatomy of a finding aid
 - *Part 1: Summary*
 - *Part 2: Notes*
 - *Part 3: Collection Inventory*
- Suggestions for getting started



Food and Nutrition Class, 1950s

What is a finding aid?

- [Society of American Archivists' definition:](#)
A description of records that gives the repository physical and intellectual control over the materials and that assists users to gain access to and understand the materials.
- **Physical control** = materials listed have a numbering or identification system applied that allows for locating and retrieving them
- **Intellectual control** = documents the context within which the materials were created, including identifying and maintaining relationships between materials



The Lantern, 1955

What does a finding aid look like?

Guide to the Hong Shen Papers, 1946-1954, 2013 SPEC.TRI.0008

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Summary Information
Biographical Note
Scope and Contents
Arrangement of Materials
Administrative Information
Controlled Access Headings
Collection Inventory

SUMMARY INFORMATION

Repository

Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee Theatre Research Institute

Creator

Hong, Shen, 1894-1955

Title

Hong Shen Papers

ID

SPEC.TRI.0008

Date

1946-1954, 2013

Extent

0.66 Cubic feet

Physical Description

(1) oversize flat box; (1) rolled item box

Abstract

The Hong Shen Papers contain photographs, a sketch of Hong, correspondence, scrolls, and promotional materials for a Hong Shen symposium held at Ohio State University, called "Hong Shen and the Modern Mediasphere in Republican Era China." Hong Shen was a Chinese playwright, director, screenwriter, film and drama theorist.

Preferred Citation

[identification of item], Hong Shen Papers, SPEC.TRI.0008, Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee Theatre Research Institute, Ohio State University

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Publication Information

2017 June

The Ohio State University Libraries Special Collections
Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee Theatre Research Institute
Thompson Library, 1858 Neil Avenue Mall, Columbus, OH 43210

Access to Materials

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Use of Materials

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Acquisitions Information

Donation from Hong Qilian, 2013

Processing Information

Processed and finding aid written by Zoe MacLeod, 2017 June

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Hong Shen (1894-1955) was a Chinese playwright, film director, screenwriter, film and drama theorist, and educator. He was considered to be a key figure in the development of modern Chinese theatrical arts. Hong attended Ohio State University, where he wrote and produced two English plays, "The Wedded Husband" and "Rainbow." In 1922, he returned to China where he taught, directed, and wrote scripts for plays and films. In 1949, Hong was appointed the Vice President of the Chinese Dramatists Association.

In 2013, to commemorate Hong's experience at Ohio State University and his daughter's donation of his materials, the university held a Hong Shen symposium, titled Hong Shen and the Modern Mediasphere in Republican Era China, as well as performances of Hong's play, "The Wedded Husband."

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS

The Hong Shen Papers contain photographs, a sketch of Hong, correspondence, and a calligraphy scroll and a painting scroll. The collection also contains posters, a flyer, and a schedule from the Hong Shen symposium held at Ohio State University, titled "Hong Shen and the Modern Mediasphere in Republican Era China". The materials date from 1946 to 1954 and 2013.

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ARRANGEMENT OF MATERIALS

Materials are arranged in chronological order.

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COLLECTION INVENTORY

| | Box | FOLDER |
|--|-----|--------|
| The New Chinese Drama Society correspondence, 1946 | 1 | 1 |
| Hong speaking in the First World Congress of the Defenders of Peace, Prague photograph, 1949 | 1 | 2 |
| Hong signing the "PRC-Cultural Cooperation Agreement: The Implementation Plan in 1955" in Berlin, photograph, 1954 December 27 | 1 | 3 |
| Sketch of Hong Shen by Beihong Xu, circa 1940s-1950s | 1 | 7 |
| | Box | ITEM |
| Calligraphy scroll by Xuan Du, circa 1940s-1950s | 2 | 1 |
| Painting scroll by Qingge Zhao, circa 1940s-1950s | 2 | 2 |
| | Box | FOLDER |
| "The Wedded Husband" revival flyer, 2013 November 16-17 | 1 | 4 |
| "The Wedded Husband" revival posters, 2013 November 16-17 | 1 | 5 |
| Hong Shen Symposium schedule, 2013 November 18 | 1 | 6 |

When are finding aids useful?

- When researchers want to know more about what is in a collection
- When a repository wants to share information about their collections broadly online
- When having a (detailed) inventory of the contents of a collection is helpful for the daily work of the repository
 - *Inventory control or collection maintenance*
 - *Determining uniqueness or overlap of collection contents*
- May be beneficial for insurance or valuation purposes



Optics Dispensary, Mendenhall Hall, 1930

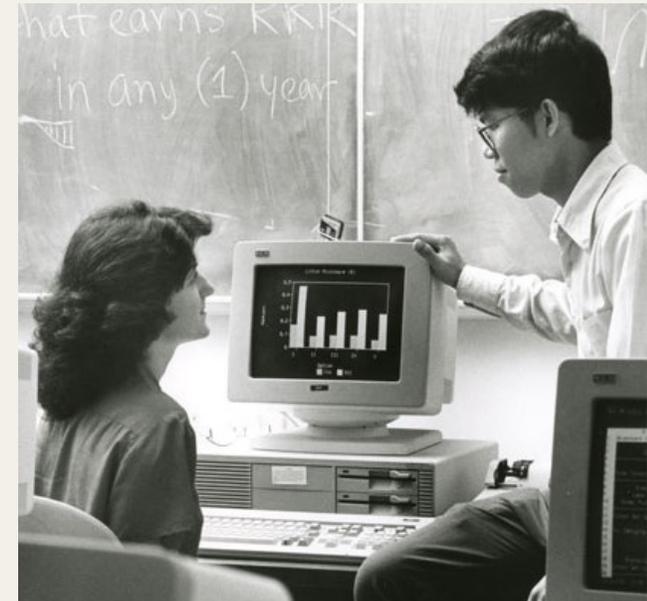
Finding aid best practices

- Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACS)
 - <https://www2.archivists.org/standards/DACS>
- An overview that gives guidelines (with examples of common occurrences)
 - *DACS users need to interpret and apply the guidelines for situations without an example to model*
- Not a template; purposefully flexible
- Designed to interact with other description standards (MARC, Dublin Core, etc.)
 - *Also designed to interact with international standards of archival description*
- Reviewed and updated regularly: last major revision in 2013; minor revisions annually

Is DACS required for a finding aid?

- Depends on your repository's goals and intended uses
- If local use only, DACS is optional
 - *i.e. if your documents will be created locally with local formatting (Word, Excel, PDF, HTML, etc.)*
- If using finding aid creation tools, DACS is required
 - *These tools are built on Encoded Archival Description (EAD), which is the XML language for DACS*
- If goal is to participate in a consortium, DACS is required
 - *All finding aid consortia require finding aids in EAD*

Engineering, 1987



Anatomy of a finding aid

- Part 1: Summary
 - *vital stats of the collection*
- Part 2: Notes
 - *Contextual description of the collection contents*
- Part 3: Collection Inventory
 - *(detailed) list of the collection contents*

Dorothy Ellen Freund and unidentified woman working on engine, 1942



Part 1: Summary

Guide to the Hong Shen Papers, 1946-1954, 2013 SPEC.TRI.0008

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- Summary Information
- Biographical Note
- Scope and Contents
- Arrangement of Materials
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- Controlled Access Headings
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Part 1: Summary

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Title

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Date

1946-1954, 2013

- If following DACS, all fields required
 - *Repository*: [DACS 2.2](#)
 - *Creator (if known)*: [DACS 2.6](#)
 - *Title*: [DACS 2.3](#)
 - *ID*: [DACS 2.1](#)
 - *Date*: [DACS 2.4](#)
- If not following DACS, most important are Title and/or ID
 - *Date is also useful & recommended*
- Language(s) of collection materials also required by DACS ([DACS 4.5](#))

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Extent

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Abstract

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Preferred Citation

[identification of item], Hong Shen Papers, SPEC.TRI.0008, Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee Theatre Research Institute, Ohio State University

- If following DACS:
 - *Extent and Physical Description are required* [DACS 2.5](#)
 - *Abstract ([DACS 2.7](#)) and Preferred Citation ([DACS 7.1.5](#)) are recommended, but not required*
- If not following DACS:
 - *Extent and/or Physical Description are the most important*

Part 2: Notes

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Hong Shen (1894-1955) was a Chinese playwright, film director, screenwriter, film and drama theorist, and educator. He was considered to be a key figure in the development of modern Chinese theatrical arts. Hong attended Ohio State University, where he wrote and produced two English plays, "The Wedded Husband" and "Rainbow." In 1922, he returned to China where he taught, directed, and wrote scripts for plays and films. In 1949, Hong was appointed the Vice President of the Chinese Dramatists Association.

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Acquisitions Information

Donation from Hong Quian, 2013

Processing Information

Processed and finding aid written by Zoe MacLeod, 2017 June

Part 2: Notes

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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- Biographical (or, Historical) Note
 - *If following DACS, recommended but not required ([DACS 2.7](#))*
- Scope and Contents
 - *Required if following DACS ([DACS 3.1](#)); recommended even if not following DACS*

Part 2: Notes

ARRANGEMENT OF MATERIALS

Materials are arranged in chronological order.



University Librarian's office, Orton Hall, 1912

- Arrangement: optional if following DACS ([DACS 3.2](#))
- Arrangement is the most critical component of **intellectual control**
 - *Foundational concepts of archival theory (provenance & original order)*
 - *Collections should not be physically arranged differently from the order received unless/ until original order can be determined*
- If you are just using finding aids for **physical control** of collections, arrangement is unnecessary

Part 2: Notes

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- Publication Information
 - *Name and location of repository are required if following DACS ([DACS 2.2](#))*
 - *Date of publication is optional if following DACS ([DACS 8.1](#))*
- Access to Materials
 - *Required if following DACS ([DACS 4.1](#))*

Part 2: Notes

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Acquisitions Information

Donation from Hong Quian, 2013

Processing Information

Processed and finding aid written by Zoe MacLeod, 2017 June

- Use of Materials
 - *Optional if following DACS ([DACS 4.4](#))*
- Acquisitions Information
 - *Optional if following DACS ([DACS 5.2](#))*
- Processing Information
 - *Optional if following DACS ([DACS 8.1](#))*

Part 3: Collection Inventory

COLLECTION INVENTORY

| | | |
|--|-----------------|--------------------|
| The New Chinese Drama Society correspondence, 1946 | Box 1 | FOLDER 1 |
| Hong speaking in the First World Congress of the Defenders of Peace, Prague photograph, 1949 | 1 | 2 |
| Hong signing the "PRC-Cultural Cooperation Agreement: The Implementation Plan in 1955" in Berlin, photograph, 1954 December 27 | 1 | 3 |
| Sketch of Hong Shen by Beihong Xu, circa 1940s-1950s | 1 | 7 |
| | Box | ITEM |
| Calligraphy scroll by Xuan Du, circa 1940s-1950s | 2 | 1 |
| Painting scroll by Qingge Zhao, circa 1940s-1950s | 2 | 2 |
| | Box | FOLDER |
| "The Wedded Husband" revival flyer, 2013 November 16-17 | 1 | 4 |
| "The Wedded Husband" revival posters, 2013 November 16-17 | 1 | 5 |
| Hong Shen Symposium schedule, 2013 November 18 | 1 | 6 |

Part 3: Collection Inventory

| | | |
|---|-----------------|--------------------|
| Calligraphy scroll by Xuan Du, circa 1940s-1950s | Box 2 | ITEM 1 |
| Painting scroll by Qingge Zhao, circa 1940s-1950s | 2 | 2 |
| "The Wedded Husband" revival flyer, 2013 November 16-17 | Box 1 | FOLDER 4 |

- Components:
 - *Title of folder, item, etc.*
 - *Date(s) of folder, item, etc.*
 - *Unique numbering of physical materials*
- Strategies:
 - If following DACS, the title and dates use the same DACS rules as other sections of the finding aid
 - Inventories can be as detailed or simple as you want
 - Often the most used and useful section of the finding aid, so best place to invest your time

Other Optional finding aid contents

Access headings/indexing terms

CONTROLLED ACCESS HEADINGS

Corporate Name(s)

- Ohio State University. Hong Shen and the Modern Mediasphere in Republican Era China.

Genre(s)

- Photographs
- Scroll paintings
- Scrolls (information artifacts)

Personal Name(s)

- Hong, Shen, 1894-1955

Subject(s)

- Dramatist, Chinese--20th century
- Theater--China--20th century

- Custodial history & provenance
- Existence of originals
- Existence of copies
- Related collections (in your repository or elsewhere)
- Information on conservation activities conducted on materials in the collection
- Complex arrangements (series, subseries, etc.)
- Notes at the folder- or item-level within the container list

Suggestions for getting started

1. Start with and focus on the Collection Inventory (Part 3)
2. At minimum, assign either a collection title or collection ID # to the collection (and record this in your finding aid)
3. Whenever possible, record and include when your repository received the collection (& from whom, if known)
4. Keep your writing simple, clear, and brief
 - *Description should be as neutral as possible*
 - *If you are using a local template, keep this simple also*
5. If using a finding aid tool, familiarize yourself with DACS (and EAD, if inclined)



Track meet at Ohio Field, c1914

Sharing your finding aids online

- On your repository's website:
 - *Attach/embed as documents (PDF, Excel, Word, etc.)*
 - Can also use a back-end finding aid writing tool (like [Archivists' Toolkit](#)) to create these formats
 - *Code as webpages (in HTML)*
- Utilize a finding aid tool
 - *OhioLINK*
[EAD Finding Aid Creation Tool / Finding Aid Repository](#)
 - [ArchivesSpace](#)
 - [Archon](#)



Library orientation, 1955

Questions?

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<https://library.osu.edu/people/putirskis.1>

All images from the Ohio State University Archives' Photograph Collection and [available via Flickr](#)



Spanish class, 1951