

VTLS Introduces Archives Management Functionality in Virtua

The result of a partnership to enhance functionality with the National Library of Wales (NLW), this new addition allows the library to arrange existing archival collection materials and maintain these collections in Virtua.

HOW IT IS DIFFERENT:

Archival cataloguing differs from bibliographic cataloguing because archives, unlike most printed material, cannot be described in isolation. An archive may consist of hundreds - or even thousands - of items and all these items will relate to one another and to the body that created them in many different ways.

An archive is, therefore, only fully comprehensible through the understanding of both its content and its context. Content may be explained through description, but context can only be reflected by arrangement.



HOW IT WORKS:

Archival arrangement is reflected in the cataloguing of archives through the use of multilevel description. Present in Virtua cataloguing through the use of a multilevel description system, the archival arrangement is ordered by the core levels outlined by the General International Standard Archival Description (ISAD(G)):

1. **Fonds** - This group is the largest body of material established. The records of each distinct organization, body, or, individual therefore form a separate group.
2. **Sub-groups** (internationally known as sub-fonds) - These levels reflect divisions within the group. Thus, in the case of a company, the records of each department will form a separate sub-group.
3. **Sub-sub groups**
4. **Series level** - Series are assemblies of material which belong together because they were created and used as a unit and have a common physical character. Based on the principle of original order these classes should be those which were maintained at the time of the active use of the records by their creator(s). For example, a series of correspondence files, or a particular committee's minute books, could be regarded as distinct classes.

5. Sub-series

6. **File** - This level represents the basic physical unit used in the handling, storage and retrieval of archive material (box, folder, volume, bundle, etc).
7. **Item** - This level represents the indivisible individual components within each file.





“VTLS was interested in providing a more general solution to hierarchical cataloging needs and wanted to take into account the possibility that more levels could be described in the future or in other applications.”
- Dr. Vinod Chachra – CEO, VTLS Inc.

THE VTLS SOLUTION:

Frequently in archive cataloguing there are gaps where not all levels are defined in all collections. A method had to be developed to allow for gaps to be accurately defined and displayed. Working closely with the experts at the National Library of Wales, VTLS was able to extend its FRBR implementation in Virtua to develop a new subsystem to handle these special needs.

The features were also designed in such a flexible manner that libraries that wanted the functionality without conforming to the seven-level architecture could use the software. VTLS' archival management has other key features of interest including

- Easy creation of, and insertion, into the hierarchy of child or parent records
- Printable record trees
- Bridging gaps in the hierarchy
- Hierarchical display of records



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