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GUIDELINES FOR THE CREATION OF DESCRIPTORS WITHIN THE ARCHIVAL DATABASES

Purpose: *Descriptors represent an important tool in the process of creating objective information about archives, as most of the modern information processing systems are based on the descriptor system, which plays a key role. Descriptors represent an important access point for retrieval of information from archival information systems. They are the starting point for searching within the content and descriptions of archives therefore they must allow users the continuation of inquiries in archival information system. Practical experience gained through archival description, together with searching and retrieval within the Slovenian archival database has demonstrated a clear need for a more systematic treatment of the question of creation of headings. In particular, there is a need for guidelines governing the creation of subject headings and thesauri for archival content that can be applied consistently across different archival information systems and software platforms.*

Method/approach: *To investigate this need, a comprehensive research project was conducted. Its primary objective was to develop practical guidelines for the formulation of subject headings and the establishment of thesauri applicable to archival records of enduring value, regardless of the software environment used for archival description. To identify the requirements for such guidelines, two complementary studies were undertaken. The first focused on users and patterns of use within the Slovenian cooperative archival database. The second study employed a qualitative research design based on content analysis. Selected domestic and international archival databases were examined using a predefined coding framework, which provided the basis for the analysis. The central research question was as follows: “Is the subject indexing of archival records implemented in a manner that enables users to conduct independent searches of archival databases and facilitates faster and easier access to archival records?”*

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Results: *The importance of names was confirmed not only by the analysis of Slovenian archival database but also by our examination of foreign archival information systems. Of the fifty-four systems analysed, only thirty-three supported descriptor-based searching. Among these, 89% enabled searching by personal names, 45% by family names, 63% by corporate body names, and 88% by geographical names. The results unequivocally confirmed the need for formal guidelines governing the formulation and application of descriptors.*

Conclusions/findings: *On the basis of the analysis of records contained in Slovenian archival information systems, together with the identification of common theoretical principles, a set of guidelines was subsequently developed for the formulation of subject headings, thesauri, and classification structures within the Slovenian archival environment, particularly for the description of documentary and archival records.*

Keywords: *access, archives, access points, descriptors, subject headings*

1 INTRODUCTION

Efforts to facilitate faster and more efficient access to archival records emerged relatively early in the development of archival theory and practice and were implemented through a variety of approaches. Methodological challenges associated with archival access were generally addressed independently by individual archival institutions, resulting in the development of diverse systems and practices. A phenomenon was already noted by Vilfan (1956).

While these systems often proved effective within their local institutional environments, they were not designed to support relational archival databases. Their functionality was primarily adapted to facilitating access through traditional archival finding aids rather than through shared digital information systems.

In contemporary archival information environments, descriptors constitute an essential tool for the creation of objective and structured information about archival records. Most modern information retrieval systems rely on descriptor-based approaches that play a central role in organising, indexing, and retrieving information. Descriptors also function as important access points within archival information systems, serving as entry through which users search for and discover archival content. Consequently, descriptors must not only support the identification of relevant records but also enable users to continue and refine their searches within the broader archival information environment.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Research on archival users has consistently demonstrated that access to archival records, whether archival reading rooms or through publicly accessible online databases, is most commonly sought through personal names, corporate body names, records creators, and geographical names. At the same time, studies have shown that searching archival databases through web-based interfaces presents considerable challenges for users, who often must rely exclusively on their own knowledge, experience, and familiarity with archival terminology.

The archival environment differs significantly from library and museum environments (Šaupperl, Semlič Rajh and Knez, 2013), largely because of the importance of context (Johnson, 2008) which constitutes one of the defining characteristics of archival records. As Šaupperl et al (2014a; 2014b) have observed, locating the

correct document does not necessarily imply that the user will be able to interpret or utilise it effectively.

Users frequently encounter difficulties in understanding the complexity of archival records (Daniels, Morgan and Yakel, 2010; Šaupperl et al, 2014a; Šaupperl et al, 2014b) often because they are unfamiliar with the professional terminology employed in archival description. These challenges are further exacerbated by the fact that not all archival holdings are represented in publicly accessible databases. The importance of names as access points has been recognised by numerous researchers. Lytle (1980) identified names as the most straightforward and effective means of accessing archival records, particularly because archival fonds and collections are commonly named after their creators. Subsequent studies have confirmed the significance of personal and corporate names in archival searching. In her theoretical discussion Dooley (1992) identified subject headings, proper names, forms of archival material, chronological periods, geographical names, occupations, and functions of records creators as key elements for ensuring more consistent access to archival records. Similarly, Cole (2000) observed the importance of names among doctoral students of history, who systematically collected personal and corporate names and subsequently used them as search terms in their research.

The findings of Duff and Johnson (2001, 2002, 2003) further reinforced these observations. Of particular significance was their conclusion that researchers tend to situate archival records within specific time and space. Likewise, Daniels and Yakel (2010) demonstrated that online archival databases are primarily designed to facilitate searches based on personal names, family names, corporate body names, and geographical names.

Michelson's study (1987) provides an additional perspective on the role of names in archival description. Examining a sample of forty institutions within the Research Libraries Information Network, she found that archives and libraries generally did not assign subject headings for personal and family names, even when the records being described formed part of personal or family collections.

The importance of names in archival retrieval has also been confirmed through an analysis of user requests submitted to the Archives of Tuzla Canton (Šaupperl et al, 2015a; Šaupperl et al. 2015b). The study revealed notable differences among user groups: students most frequently searched by place, time period, subject,

and personal names; amateur researchers primarily searched by names, place, and time period; whereas professional historians most often searched by subject, place, and time period.

The significance of personal names, family names, and corporate body names within archival information systems is further reflected in the international standard ISAAR(CPF) (2004) which standardises authority records for these categories of entities. Such names constitute fundamental access points to archival records. The standard explicitly encourages the development of national rules for the standardisation of access points and the creation of authority records.

Practical experience gained through archival description, together with searching and retrieval within the Slovenian archival database has demonstrated a clear need for a more systematic treatment of this issue. In particular, there is a need for guidelines governing the creation of subject headings and thesauri for archival content that can be applied consistently across different archival information systems and software platforms.

3 METHODOLOGY

To investigate this need, a comprehensive research project was conducted. Its primary objective was to develop practical guidelines for the formulation of subject headings and the establishment of thesauri applicable to archival records of enduring value, regardless of the software environment used for archival description. Given the increasing standardisation of archival description practices within Slovenian public archives, the development of a unified subject indexing system and a common thesaurus for a shared archival database was considered particularly important.

To identify the requirements for such guidelines, two complementary studies were undertaken. The first focused on users and patterns of use within the Slovenian cooperative archival database SIRAnet and included an analysis of web server log files generated by the scopeArchiv Query application. The results unequivocally confirmed the need for formal guidelines governing the formulation and application of descriptors.

The second study employed a qualitative research design based on content analysis. Selected domestic and international archival databases were examined using a pre-

defined coding framework, which provided the basis for the analysis. The central research question was as follows: “Is the subject indexing of archival records implemented in a manner that enables users to conduct independent searches of archival databases and facilitates faster and easier access to archival records?”

The analysis focused on several key issues:

1. whether descriptor searching had been implemented;
2. which categories of descriptors were searchable (personal names, family names, corporate body names, geographical names, subject headings, functions, and others);
3. whether thesauri existed but remained inaccessible because descriptive units were unpublished or not linked to descriptors;
4. whether descriptor-based search tools were functional and user-friendly;
5. whether thesauri were organised into distinct categories;
6. whether descriptors had been standardised and
7. whether semantic relationships among descriptors had been established in accordance with ISAAR(CPF).

The importance of names was confirmed not only by the analysis of Slovenian archival databases but also by our examination of foreign archival information systems. Of the fifty-four systems analysed, only thirty-three supported descriptor-based searching. Among these, 89% enabled searching by personal names, 45% by family names, 63% by corporate body names, and 88% by geographical names. On the basis of the analysis of records contained in Slovenian archival information systems, together with the identification of common theoretical principles, a set of guidelines was subsequently developed for the formulation of subject headings, thesauri, and classification structures within the Slovenian archival environment, particularly for the description of current records and archival records. Given the relatively limited experience of Slovenian archival theory and practice in this field, the proposed guidelines draw upon methodological principles of subject indexing developed by Slovenian librarians as well as archival practices established in Canada and the United Kingdom. However, this does not constitute a simple transfer of library theory and practice to the archival domain. The distinctive nature of archival holdings requires solutions that differ fundamentally from those employed in libraries. The same applies to approaches developed within

foreign archival traditions. Owing to the enduring nature of archival records and the importance of contextual relationships, subject analysis in archives raises issues that are not encountered in the library environment.

4 GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF DESCRIPTOR FORMULATION

The description of archival records constitutes one of the fundamental professional activities within archival practice, as only adequately described records can be effectively identified, retrieved, and used by researchers. This principle has become particularly important in the digital environment, where increasing quantities of archival records are made available through online catalogues, archival information systems, and digital repositories. Consequently, the formulation and assignment of descriptors, as a core component of subject indexing, represent a critical element of archival description.

The primary purpose of descriptors is to provide additional intellectual access to archival records by representing their content in a consistent and controlled manner. In archival information systems, descriptors function as access points that facilitate information retrieval and enable users to navigate complex archival holdings. The effectiveness of any descriptor system therefore depends not only on the quality of the descriptors themselves but also on the consistency with which they are applied and the semantic relationships established among them.

When assigning descriptors, archivists must take into account the diversity of user communities and the variety of search strategies employed by different categories of users. Research has consistently demonstrated that archival users possess varying levels of expertise and familiarity with archival terminology. While professional researchers may formulate highly specific queries, less experienced users often rely on broader concepts or personal knowledge. Because most users are not proficient in advanced retrieval techniques, archival information systems should support intuitive and transparent searching based on clearly structured descriptor systems.

Descriptors are derived from the content of archival records and are intended to represent, as accurately as possible, the subjects, entities, activities, and contexts documented within a particular unit of description. Their formulation is therefore

closely linked to the intellectual analysis of records. This task becomes increasingly complex at higher levels of archival description, such as fonds, sub-fonds, series, and sub-series, where records frequently encompass a wide range of subjects and activities that cannot easily be represented through a limited number of indexing terms.

In practice, archival fonds may comprise hundreds or even thousands of files and physical units. Because descriptors are assigned on the basis of content, comprehensive subject analysis at higher levels of description often requires archivists to balance specificity with practicality. The objective is not to provide an exhaustive representation of every subject documented within a fonds but rather to identify those concepts that most effectively support retrieval and contextual understanding. For this reason, descriptor assignment should be based on controlled vocabularies and thesauri developed for specific categories of descriptors. Controlled vocabularies ensure terminological consistency, while thesauri provide the semantic framework necessary for establishing relationships among concepts.

The principles proposed in this study draw upon the Slovenian Subject Headings System (Splošni slovenski geslovník (SSG, 2002) and the international standard SIST ISO 5963:1996, Documentation—Methods for Examining Documents, Determining Their Subjects, and Selecting Indexing Terms.

Whenever a suitable descriptor already exists within the vocabulary it should be selected and assigned directly to the unit of description unit. Particular care is required, however, because identical terms may represent different concepts or entities. Archivists must therefore verify the meaning and scope of a descriptor before assigning it. For example the descriptor *Mirna* may refer to a settlement, a river in Slovenia, or a river in Croatia, each of which constitutes a distinct authority record.

Example:

- *Mirna* [*Mirna*]
- *Mirna* [*river, Slovenia*]
- *Mirna* [*river, Croatia*]

If an appropriate descriptor is not available within the existing vocabulary, a new descriptor should be created and incorporated into the thesaurus together with a corresponding authority record. The development of new descriptors must follow established rules to ensure consistency within the indexing system.

The principles governing descriptor assignment largely correspond to the principles advocated by both the Slovenian Subject Headings System and IFLA principle of specificity (Iflin smernice, 2002). According to this principle, records should be described using the most specific concept that adequately represents their content, while avoiding simultaneous indexing by both broader and narrower terms. Semantic relationships recorded within authority files ensure that users can navigate from one concept to related concepts without requiring redundant indexing.

Archival practice demonstrates that users generally seek for archival information in one of two ways. In the first case, users possess only a general idea of the information they seek and rely on the search system to guide them towards relevant materials if searching online. If they decide to consult the records in the reading room they can be assisted by the archivist. In the second case, users search for records relating to a clearly defined subject, person, organisation, or event. In both situations, the quality of descriptor formulation significantly influences the success of information retrieval. For example a researcher interested in buildings designed by the Maribor master builder Ludvik Baltzer may not know which categories of buildings he designed. Effective indexing should therefore allow retrieval through narrower subject concepts such as residential buildings, ecclesiastical buildings etc. Such an approach enables users to discover relevant records even when their initial query is incomplete or imprecise.

As a general principle, units of description should be assigned as many relevant descriptors as necessary to facilitate retrieval. The degree of specificity should correspond to the level of archival description. Broader descriptors are generally appropriate at higher levels, such as fonds and series, whereas narrower and more precise descriptors may be assigned at file or item level. The greater the precision and consistency of descriptor assignment, the greater the likelihood that users will successfully identify relevant records.

To support effective retrieval, archival information systems should also enable users to navigate among hierarchically related concepts. Broader, narrower, and related terms should be linked through semantic relationships that allow users to move easily between different levels of conceptual specificity. Such relationships are particularly important in archival environments because records are interpreted within their administrative, historical, and functional contexts.

The establishment of semantic relationships presents additional challenges when historical concepts and classifications are involved. Hierarchical relationships that existed in the past do not necessarily correspond to contemporary understandings of the same concepts. Consequently, descriptor systems must be sufficiently flexible to accommodate historical terminology while maintaining consistency and usability for contemporary users.

Given both the volume of archival holdings and the contextual nature of archival description, complete representation of all aspects of record content is rarely achievable. Descriptor systems should therefore be designed to provide an optimal balance between comprehensiveness and manageability.

In this respect, the archival domain can largely adopt IFLA's principle of uniqueness (*Ibidem*), according to which "each concept or named entity should be represented by a single authorised form". The purpose of this principle is to ensure control over synonyms and variant forms while promoting consistency in information retrieval.

Accordingly, each descriptor should be represented by a single authority record that incorporates non-preferred forms, synonyms, and other semantic relationships. Geographical names constitute a partial exception to this principle, as distinct places sharing the same name require separate authority records in order to preserve their unique spatial and historical identities.

Because archival description is inherently contextual, one of the most important tasks in descriptor formulation is the creation of semantic networks linking descriptors to descriptive units and to one another. Archivists therefore establish two interconnected types of relationships: relationships between records and descriptors, and relationships among descriptors themselves. Together, these relationships form the intellectual structure that enables sophisticated retrieval and supports users in navigating complex archival information systems.

4.1 UNIFIED CREATION OF DESCRIPTORS

The standardization of descriptors constitutes a fundamental prerequisite for the development and maintenance of a coherent archival thesaurus. Descriptors must be constructed according to uniform principles of form and structure in order to ensure their mutual comparability and semantic consistency. Such standardiza-

tion not only contributes to the internal integrity of the thesaurus but also facilitates efficient information retrieval within archival information systems.

Within the archival domain, this requirement corresponds to the IFLA principle of consistency (Ibidem), according to which “every newly established subject heading should conform in form and structure to comparable headings already present within the system”. Consistent subject representation of archival records therefore presupposes the application of standardized rules for the formulation of personal names, family names, corporate bodies, geographical names, functions, and topical descriptors.

As a general principle, descriptors are established in the singular form, except in cases where linguistic conventions or conceptual considerations necessitate the use of the plural. Consistency in the application of number is of particular importance. Aupič (2014) has observed that the rules governing singular and plural forms in the Slovene Subject Headings (SSG) are overly complex, a view that is shared in the present study. The complexity of these rules may create difficulties in both the assignment and retrieval of subject descriptors.

Examples:

- building permit
- criminal case
- option
- construction
- denationalization
- administrative dispute
- Christianity
- education system
- upbringing and education
- newspaper
- official gazette

Descriptors are recorded in the nominative case and may be classified as either simple or compound. Simple descriptors consist of a single lexical unit and are generally preferred whenever they provide an adequate representation of the subject matter. This approach is consistent with Rule 3.1.2.1 of the SSG.

Examples:

- teacher
- strike
- tax

In practice, however, simple descriptors frequently prove insufficient for the precise representation of archival content. In such circumstances, compound descriptors are employed. These take the form of multiword expressions and are recorded in natural word order. This practice corresponds to Rules 3.1.2.2 and 3.2 of the SSG (*Ibidem*), the latter of which also governs the formulation of personal names.

Examples:

- criminal case
- business corporation
- public order and peace

An exception to the principle of natural word order is represented by personal names, which are recorded in inverted form.

Examples:

- Aškerc, Anton [1856–1912]
- Novak, Miroslav [1961–]

The use of inverted personal names reflects the functional requirements of information retrieval systems, particularly with regard to alphabetical arrangement and the sorting of search results. Such a form enables the immediate grouping of individuals sharing the same surname and thereby facilitates identification and disambiguation.

Where a descriptor is capable of expressing more than one meaning, semantic clarification is achieved through the use of qualifiers. Qualifiers serve to specify the intended meaning of a descriptor and thus reduce the possibility of ambiguity in both indexing and retrieval.

Qualifiers are recorded in square brackets following the descriptor and constitute an integral component of the authorized form. The use of square brackets is deliberate, as they function as editorial markers indicating information supplied by the archivist during the process of description.

In certain categories of descriptors, qualifiers represent a mandatory element of the authorized form. Mandatory qualifiers are applied, among others, to:

- names of saints (e.g., Clare of Assisi [1193–1253, saint]);
- names of popes (e.g., John Paul II [1920–2005, pope]);
- names of families and dynasties (e.g., Garibaldi family [1649–1945]);
- titles of periodicals and monographs (e.g., Marburger Zeitung [periodical]);
- general concepts requiring semantic differentiation (e.g., Nuba [people]; Nuba [language]);
- geographical names (e.g., Mirna [settlement]; Mirna [river]);
- homonymous terms (e.g., depression [medicine]; depression [economics]).

The systematic application of standardized forms, grammatical conventions, and qualifiers contributes significantly to terminological consistency and enhances the precision of subject access within archival information systems.

4.2 ESTABLISHMENT OF SYNONYMS

The establishment of synonym relationships represents a fundamental component of vocabulary control in archival thesauri. Natural languages are characterized by lexical variation, whereby multiple terms may denote the same or closely related concepts. Such terms are generally referred to as synonyms and may comprise both indigenous lexical forms and loanwords. The *Slovar slovenskega knjižnega jezika* (2000) defines a synonym as “a word having the same or nearly the same meaning as another word.” From the perspective of information organization and retrieval, synonymy constitutes a significant challenge, as users may employ different terms to express the same information need.

Examples:

- map ↔ geographical map ↔ geographic map
- agricultural reform ↔ agrarian reform
- domicile register ↔ domicile record book
- marketing ↔ market promotion

The need for systematic synonym control is particularly pronounced in archival information systems. Archival records are embedded within specific historical, administrative, legal, and social contexts, which often result in the coexistence of multiple designations for the same phenomenon, institution, function, or activity. Furthermore, terminology employed by archivists may differ considerably from that used by researchers or members of the general public. Without appropriate

mechanisms for synonym control, such variation may adversely affect retrieval performance by fragmenting access to conceptually identical information.

The management of synonymy within archival thesauri may therefore be understood as an application of the IFLA principle of synonym control, according to which semantically equivalent or near-equivalent terms are linked through explicit equivalence relationships. The objective of this process is to ensure that all references to a given concept converge upon a single authorized access point, thereby promoting consistency in indexing and improving retrieval effectiveness.

Within an equivalence structure, one term is selected as the authority record and serves as the preferred representation of the concept within the thesaurus. Alternative lexical forms are designated as non-preferred terms and are linked to the authority record through reciprocal references. In accordance with established thesaurus practice, non-preferred terms are connected to the preferred descriptor by means of the reference see, while the preferred descriptor contains corresponding used for references indicating the lexical variants subsumed under it.

Examples:

- Map
 - used for: geographical map
 - used for: geographic map
- Geographical map
 - see: map
- Geographic map
 - see: map

By consolidating synonymous expressions under a single authorized descriptor, the thesaurus establishes a consistent terminological framework that supports both uniform indexing practices and effective retrieval of archival information. The explicit representation of equivalence relationships thereby serves as an essential mechanism for overcoming linguistic variation and improving access to archival resources across diverse user communities.

4.3 ESTABLISHING HOMONYMS

Homonyms are words that share the same form but have different meanings (Ibidem).

To prevent the retrieval of irrelevant archival material and to increase both system precision and search accuracy, homonyms must be clearly distinguished.

For homonyms belonging to the category of subject descriptors, different meanings are differentiated through qualifiers. In building homonyms we are following the IFLA principle of homonym control.

Examples:

- Bank [the side of the river]
- Bank [place to keep money]

For homonymous geographical names, distinctions are made by assigning the descriptor to the appropriate class within the geographical-name thesaurus and by using a qualifier, which in such cases is mandatory.

Examples:

- Mirna [Mirna] (geographical name → settlement name → settlement)
- Mirna [municipality] (geographical name → regional name → municipality)
- Mirna [river, Slovenia] (geographical name → hydronym → river name)
- Mirna [river, Croatia] (geographical name → hydronym → river name)

4.4 ABBREVIATIONS

As a general rule, abbreviations should be avoided in archival information systems. A single abbreviation may have multiple meanings, not only across different countries but even within the same linguistic or administrative context.

Examples:

- ZKJ – League of Communists of Yugoslavia
- ZKJ – Zeitschrift für Kindschafts- und Jugendrecht

Moreover, most users are unfamiliar with many abbreviations unless they possess specialized knowledge of a particular subject area. The same principle applies to descriptor construction. All abbreviations should therefore be expanded, and the authority records should consist of the full term or official name. This approach follows SSG Rule 3.7.1.2 (*Splošni slovenski geslovník*, 2002).

Abbreviations may be used only when they are more widely recognized than the full form.

Examples:

- NATO
- UNESCO
- AIDS

Whenever an abbreviation is included in the system, cross-references linking the abbreviation and the full official name must be established.

Examples:

NATO

- used for: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

UNESCO

- used for: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

4.5 ESTABLISHING CROSS-REFERENCES

Because both archivists and users must understand the semantic relationships among descriptors when describing and searching archival materials, archival information systems must incorporate a structured network of cross-references. These references guide users from authorized records to related records and from broader concepts to narrower and associated concepts, thereby facilitating the retrieval of archival content.

Two types of references are distinguished: equivalence references and associative references.

5 CONCLUSION

The guidelines presented in this paper are grounded in the IFLA „Principles Underlying Subject Heading Languages“ (2002), the Guidelines for the creation of alphabetic catalogues (Pravilnik I priručnik za izradu abecednih kataloga, 1986), the Rules for the construction of Personal, Place and Corporate names (1997) and the Rules for Archival Description developed by Canadian archivists. Building upon these established frameworks, the present study seeks to adapt and extend their underlying principles to the specific requirements of archival description and archival information systems. The proposed guidelines represent one of the first systematic attempts within Slovenian archival theory and practice to establish a coherent theoretical and methodological framework for the formulation of descriptors and the development of archival the-

sauri. Although controlled vocabularies and authority systems have long been recognised as essential instruments in libraries and other information environments, their systematic application within archival institutions has remained comparatively limited. The increasing availability of archival descriptions through online information systems and digital repositories has, however, made the development of consistent descriptor systems indispensable for ensuring effective access to archival records.

In adapting international principles to the archival domain, the objective was not to reproduce models developed for libraries uncritically, but rather to identify those concepts that can be meaningfully transferred to the archival context and modified where necessary. Consequently, the guidelines incorporate and reinterpret a number of fundamental principles, including the principles of uniqueness, synonym control, homonym differentiation, consistency, naming, semantics, specificity, and the principle concerning the origin and development of archival vocabulary.

At the same time, the study recognises that archival records differ fundamentally from library materials in terms of provenance, context, structure, and long-term preservation. For this reason, several of the proposed solutions depart from traditional library approaches and instead reflect the theoretical foundations and practical requirements of archival science. Particular emphasis has been placed on preserving contextual relationships, supporting hierarchical navigation, and facilitating user access through semantically connected descriptors and authority records.

A central objective in developing these guidelines was to achieve the greatest possible degree of clarity, consistency, and practical applicability. Descriptor systems can fulfil their function only when the rules governing their creation and application are sufficiently transparent to ensure their consistent implementation by archivists across institutions. By promoting standardised descriptor formulation and the systematic establishment of semantic relationships, the proposed framework contributes to the development of more coherent archival information systems and more effective retrieval of archival records.

The guidelines have been conceived not only as a practical tool for archivists engaged in archival description but also as a means of improving the user experience within archival databases and information systems. Enhanced consistency in descriptor formulation enables more accurate searching, facilitates independent user navigation, and strengthens intellectual access to archival records.

It is hoped that the principles and recommendations presented in this study will provide a foundation for the development of a national standard governing the formulation of all categories of archival descriptors. Such a standard would contribute significantly to the harmonisation of archival descriptive practices, support the development of shared authority files and thesauri, and reduce many of the difficulties currently encountered by both archivists and users in the discovery, retrieval, and interpretation of archival records. Ultimately, the establishment of a standardised descriptor framework would represent an important step towards improving access to Slovenia's archival heritage in both national and international information environments.

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