Why ArchivesSpace? Why Now?
Faced with the looming 2024 shutdown of our existing finding aid application and limited IT support for a new tool, the UW-Eau Claire archives took action. We saw a chance to leverage ArchivesSpace, a platform offering more than just hosting and discovery, to reimagine our operations broadly. Our initial focus: efficiently replicating finding aids in ArchivesSpace and configuring the tool to improve search and user experience when compared to previous finding aid discovery tool.

Transforming Our Finding Aids

Project Timeline

- **July 2023**: Learned we had approximately 6 months to replace our platform for hosting finding aids online.
- **August 2023**: Training videos and practice in the ArchivesSpace sandbox online.
- **October 2023**: Begin training student assistants on the data entry process using a simplified step-by-step manual.
- **November 2023**: Begin transitioning the project from easy object creation to more complex object creation (e.g., configuring how we add information about born digital and digitized content).
- **December 2023**: Begin reviewing and publishing finding aids in ArchivesSpace.
- **January 2024**: Create a second repository and begin adding 3rd party (Wisconsin Historical Society) finding aids for collections in our custody.
- **February 2024**: Implement new style formatting elements to resolve display issues and improve overall finding aid appearance.
- **January 2024**: We hit a brick wall! Text field formatting causing finding aids to display poorly!
- **February 2024**: Begin using Notepad++ to increase data entry efficiency.
- **March 2024**: Feeling like complete frauds developing a MAC 2024 poster for our chaotic ArchivesSpace implementation.
- **April 2024**: Forced to launch our public interface earlier than anticipated due to unexpected University website reconfiguration.

Rewards & Challenges

- **Staff Development**: Learn a new program & develop problem solving skills; mentor students on a widely adopted tool in the field.
- **Team Building**: ESSENTIAL! 4 months into the project we needed a break to bond as co-workers outside of the office to keep us focused. Afterwards, apply “get to know you”?s at beginning of staff meetings.
- **Archives Team**: Has more administrative and development control; requires staff oversight, review, and problem-solving.
- **Manual Entry Process**: Inconsistencies in existing finding aids creates inconsistency in creating resource records/training students & volunteers – requires staff oversight, review(4,3),(995,995).