

Item level description was actually carried out for the "Maryland State Papers" series, the portion of this accession that precedes the Governor's Miscellaneous Papers chronologically. A sample of this effort is attached as Enclosure (4). Even using a computer, this was a huge undertaking, and as the enclosure shows, the effort was probably overkill for the thousands of individual minor documents like wheat receipts, pay orders, etc.

Sorting a collection of this size into subseries has some merit, but still remains a massive effort. The present folder level description, in effect, allows the computer to electronically sort the series and create records of "all pardon papers," or "all muster lists" or even those of a particular date. A secondary benefit is that physical handling of documents is decreased, which may prove significant as far as preservation is concerned. Further, the present database design allows particularly noteworthy items to be described individually for subsequent retrieval.

An interesting hypothetical question would be how applicable the current description process would be for a collection that is totally disordered. In that case, the diversity of documents within any given folder would likely prove problematic for data field size limitations. Two options would be to sort the entire collection into subseries, as discussed previously, or to sort the series in "chunks" and then apply the present computerized folder level description. "Chunk" size would be a product of degree of disorder, size of database field, and possibly even such mundane concerns as space available to spread out material.

This approach, while theoretically assailable, does have merit. Fortunately, the existing series is well-ordered, whether from the governor's office or previous processing, so this discussion is moot.

Present Finding Aid

While the present finding aid, Enclosure (3) (without list of folders), is targetted primarily at staff archivists, it could be improved in a number of areas. Specifically:

a. The Abstract, if read carelessly, gives the impression that documents in this series were the product of the governor's office. This impression is borne out in the Scope which ties the series title to ". . . who created the papers." The series is