

To: Joint Steering Committee for Revision of AACR

From: Ann Huthwaite, ACOC representative

Subject: Class of materials concept and GMDs

The following paper was prepared in August 2002 for discussion at the September 2002 JSC meeting. It was a restricted paper for distribution to JSC members only. At its April 2003 meeting JSC agreed that it should be issued as a formal JSC document to make it available to the constituencies. It is for information only and responses are not required.

Preface

At the May 2002 JSC meeting it was agreed that I would write a discussion paper on resolving the problems associated with the class of materials concept and the related issue of GMDs. This paper represents my personal views; it should not be considered either a Chair paper or an ACOC paper.

The problem

The 2001 Amendments contain new wording for rule 0.24, which instructs the cataloguer to bring out all aspects of the item/resource being described, including its content, its carrier, its type of publication, its bibliographic relationships, and whether it is published or unpublished. In any given area, all relevant aspects are to be described. These instructions replace the previous cardinal principle that the description of a physical item should be based in the first instance on the chapter to which it belongs. This principle implies that an item/resource belongs to a predominant class. Despite the change to the text of 0.24, in practice the cardinal principle still holds true. Cataloguers are still determining the predominant class to which an item/resource belongs, and are treating other aspects as secondary.

In his paper *The Logical Structure of the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules – Part I*, Tom Delsey highlighted the inconsistencies associated with the class of materials concept, particularly in the criteria used for defining a given class. Aspects of content, carrier or issuance can be used as determining factors.

Particular problems are encountered when an item/resource exhibits characteristics of more than one class, e.g., a digital map, an electronic journal, or a motion picture on DVD. Cataloguers are being forced to choose a predominant class when in fact no one set of characteristics is more important than another.

The use of chapter 9 for all electronic resources, including remote access electronic resources, is presenting another set of problems. The characteristics of many of these resources are more closely related to their tangible equivalents in other chapters than

to the types of resources that have traditionally been covered by this chapter, e.g., programs and data files. There is a sound case for confining the application of chapter 9 to these latter types of resources only.

The solution

For the new rule 0.24 to operate effectively, the requirement for assigning a resource/item to a predominant class should be abandoned, and the concept of “class” should be removed from the rules. Items/resources should be considered to have multiple characteristics, all bearing equal weight.

The barriers

What actually prevents a cataloguer from following the intent of the new rule 0.24? There are a number of methods of procedure which assume that an item/resource belongs to a predominant class, and decisions about how that item/resource is described are based on the class or chapter selected. These are: the choice of the chief source of information and prescribed sources of information; the choice of a general material designation; and, the recording of area 5 (in particular, the specific material designation).

There has been much debate on the restructuring of part I to address the “content vs carrier” issue, but to my mind this is a red herring. The arrangement of part I is not the barrier; it is embodied in the methods of procedure listed above. The arrangement of part I should have one objective, and that is to assist the cataloguer in finding all the rules relevant to the aspects of the item/resource being described. This could mean retaining a structure very much like the one we have now, with a general chapter and other chapters illustrating types of material with common sets of characteristics.

Removing the barriers

I shall examine each barrier in turn and suggest possible solutions for its removal.

1. *Choice of chief source of information*

Each chapter contains a complex set of instructions for determining the chief source of information. The primary objective is to achieve consistency in cataloguing by ensuring that for a given item/resource, cataloguers will choose the same source and therefore record the same description. The chief source also plays a part in the construction of some headings. As would be expected, the specified chief sources are those which provide the most complete information. In some cases the whole resource can be the chief source, e.g. electronic resources, because of the complex nature of the material and the difficulties associated with specifying a single source.

The chief source for electronic resources was changed from the title screen to the resource itself in the 2001 Amendments. This change has introduced a contradiction

into the rules that remains unresolved. In practice a different set of rules is being applied to the electronic version of a separately published tangible resource. This contradiction will compound as more and more resources are issued in multiple formats.

The selection of chief source could be greatly simplified by instructing the cataloguer, in all cases, to choose that source which provides the most complete information. It is hard to imagine that a cataloguer would select sources other than the ones currently specified in the rules. For example, the title page of a book supplies the most complete information and would therefore be selected by the cataloguer in most instances. I therefore propose that changing the selection of chief source to a simple all-encompassing instruction would make little difference to current practice. However, this assumption needs testing.

It is recommended that the instruction to use as the chief source of information that source which provides the most complete information be tested with a variety of material to determine if there would be any significant divergence from current practice.

2. Choice of prescribed sources of information

The same argument can be applied to the selection of the prescribed sources of information. In fact, I would suggest that many cataloguers are relying on their judgement instead of conscientiously applying the rules in this area. I therefore recommend that this practice be tested as well.

As with the choice of chief source of information, complex and lengthy sets of instructions for each chapter could be replaced with a single, generalised rule.

It is recommended that testing be conducted to determine if the rules for selecting prescribed sources of information could be eliminated and replaced with cataloguer's judgement without causing any significant divergence from current practice.

3. General material designations (GMDs)

There are many problems and inconsistencies associated with GMDs, and these were outlined by Barbara Tillett in her paper for JSC (4JSC/Chair/73). Two suggestions for fundamental change were explored: firstly, the use of a device in the bibliographic record representing the mode of expression; and secondly, moving terms representing physical format and form of carrier to area 5 (physical description) or to notes.

At their planning meeting in May 2002, the members of JSC discussed the feasibility of implementing these two suggestions. Terms from List 2 in AACR at the expression level were identified. It was agreed that most of the remaining terms could be relocated to area 5, some of which could be used as qualifiers (e.g., "braille" and "electronic resource"). When terms and concepts from *Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records* (FRBR) are introduced into AACR, it will be logical and consistent to consider the general material designation as an expression-level indicator, and the specific material designation as a manifestation-level indicator.

Probably the most controversial aspect of Barbara Tillett's suggestions is the proposal to encode the device for representing the mode of expression in the machine-readable version of the bibliographic record. Although AACR is a content standard operating independently from the format or "wrapper," this does not preclude the inclusion of the concept of coded data in the rules. MARC does not have to be mentioned specifically. However, it may be preferable to also incorporate the expression-level indicator in the textual part of the bibliographic record, possibly in a new area. Another place for it (suggested by Barbara Tillett) would be an element in the expression-level citation that is being proposed by the Format Variation Working Group.

Expression-level indicators would also have to be created for those modes of expression identified in FRBR and not encompassed by the current list of GMDs.

It is recommended that a group be formed to "deconstruct" the GMD, and to make recommendations on the relocation of existing terms from List 2 to either expression-level indicators or to description at the manifestation level. The group should compile a complete list of expression-level indicators representing all modes of expression, including both those relocated from the list of GMDs and any others identified in FRBR. Recommendations should be made on how the expression-level indicator should be recorded in the bibliographic record.

4. Recording information in area 5

If the cataloguer were not using one class or chapter as the basis for description, he or she would need some guidance on the construction of the description of the item/resource in area 5, in particular the specific material designation. Either multiple or composite statements could be allowed, with rules supplied that give some principles for their construction. The notion of "physical" description would be no longer valid, as aspects of content and carrier would be recorded in this area. Coded data in the machine-readable version of the record could reflect the various characteristics of the item/resource.

A complete rationalisation of the terms used in the specific material designation would be necessary, taking into account the terms relocated from the general material designation. For example, would "videorecording" be used as a single over-arching term, or would the more specific designations of "videocartridge," "videodisc," "videocassette," and "videoreel" still be used? And if the latter option were chosen, would it be helpful for the coded data to group these more specific forms (possibly through tables) to assist collocation in OPAC displays?

ACOC has made some suggestions about rationalising the lists of terms in area 5 for chapters 6, 7, and 9. It believes that terms in common usage should be used in all circumstances. If this principle were adopted throughout AACR it would greatly simplify the rules in area 5.

It is recommended that a group be formed to make recommendations on a rationalisation of the terms used in area 5, and on how statements could be

constructed that allow for the description of all aspects of an item/resource at the manifestation level. This could be the same group examining the deconstruction of GMDs.

Mode of issuance

In their paper presented at the International Conference on the Principles and Future Development of AACR, Jean Hiron and Crystal Graham referred to the three dimensions of publications: (1) their intellectual and/or artistic content; (2) their physical carrier(s); and (3) the susceptibility of content to change over time (or publication status).

Where should publication status, or mode of issuance, fit into the description on an item/resource? I think we should simply consider it another characteristic, along with aspects of content and carrier. However, the fact that a resource is continuing in nature needs to be communicated clearly to the user. In current catalogues this fact is communicated in fairly unsatisfactory ways. Certain clues can be used to infer that a resource is ongoing, such as the presence of numbering in the holdings statement, or the OPAC functionality may allow limiting, using the coded data in the MARC record. It may also be useful to convey explicitly to the user that a continuing resource is either a serial or an integrating resource.

It is recommended that a group be formed to propose an appropriate mechanism for communicating explicitly to the catalogue user that a resource is continuing in nature.

Organisation of part I of AACR

Although I identified this issue as a red herring, the organisation of part I is still important to the extent that it should meet the objective of enabling the cataloguer to locate all the rules relevant to the aspects of the item/resource being described. It should lead the cataloguer intuitively to the appropriate rules.

A very promising arrangement is one suggested by the CC:DA Task Force on Alpha Prototype of Reorganized Part One in their report on the prototype (in 4JSC/Chair/75/ALA response). The Task Force suggested a reorganisation that requires the cataloguer to consider all five aspects of the code. The sections would be: (1) Generalities and principles; (2) Content (containing rules for particular types of content, possibly divided into two parts for content and form of expression); (3) Carrier; (4) Publication pattern; and (5) Granularity. Such an arrangement would convey to the cataloguer the conceptual foundation of the rules, and should achieve the stated objective.

It is recommended that a group be formed to make recommendations on how part I should be structured. The objective of the structure should be to enable the cataloguer to easily and intuitively locate all the rules relevant to the aspects of the item/resource being described.

JSC has already agreed that as far as possible rules should be generalised and included in the general chapter. Work on applying this principle should continue.

It is recommended that work continue on generalising the rules as far as possible through the consolidation of the general chapter in part I.

Treatment of electronic resources

In any investigation of the structure of part I, consideration should be given to reconceptualising the treatment of electronic resources. There is a strong case to be made for including rules for “document-like” electronic resources in the chapters for their tangible equivalents, with rules for “non-document-like” resources remaining in a separate, discrete chapter. The treatment of remote access electronic resources available via the Internet without “document-like” qualities may need to be covered in another separate chapter.

It is recommended that the group investigating the structure of part I consider a reconceptualisation of the treatment of electronic resources.

Relationship between AACR, formats, and systems

At its planning meeting in May 2002, JSC reaffirmed that the rules are independent of the format or “wrapper.” However, this does not mean that those responsible for rule revision should ignore the environment in which the rules operate. As stated in the British Library response to 4JSC/ALA/36/Rev (Specific characteristics of electronic resources), we need to build much stronger relationships with systems developers and OPAC designers. Communication with format specialist groups (e.g. MARBI) should also increase. Information about the characteristics of bibliographic resources could be much more clearly conveyed to users by using appropriate devices in OPAC displays.

It is recommended that when considering changes to the rules in part I that JSC communicates with systems developers and format specialists with a view to enhancing user understanding of catalogue displays.

Summary of recommendations

1. *It is recommended that the instruction to use as the chief source of information that source which provides the most complete information be tested with a variety of material to determine if there would be any significant divergence from current practice.*
2. *It is recommended that testing be conducted to determine if the rules for selecting prescribed sources of information could be eliminated and replaced*

with cataloguer's judgement without causing any significant divergence from current practice.

3. *It is recommended that a group be formed to "deconstruct" the GMD, and to make recommendations on the relocation of existing terms from List 2 to either expression-level indicators or to description at the manifestation level. The group should compile a complete list of expression-level indicators representing all modes of expression, including both those relocated from the list of GMDs and any others identified in FRBR. Recommendations should be made on how the expression-level indicator should be recorded in the bibliographic record.*
4. *It is recommended that a group be formed to make recommendations on a rationalisation of the terms used in area 5, and on how statements could be constructed that allow for the description of all aspects of an item/resource at the manifestation level. This could be the same group examining the deconstruction of GMDs.*
5. *It is recommended that a group be formed to propose an appropriate mechanism for communicating explicitly to the catalogue user that a resource is continuing in nature.*
6. *It is recommended that a group be formed to make recommendations on how part I should be structured. The objective of the structure should be to enable the cataloguer to easily and intuitively locate all the rules relevant to the aspects of the item/resource being described.*
7. *It is recommended that work continue on generalising the rules as far as possible through the consolidation of the general chapter in part I.*
8. *It is recommended that the group investigating the structure of part I consider a reconceptualisation of the treatment of electronic resources.*
9. *It is recommended that when considering changes to the rules in part I that JSC communicates with systems developers and format specialists with a view to enhancing user understanding of catalogue displays.*