

**To:** ALA/ALCTS/CCS Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access

**From:** John Attig

**RE:** Rules for Early Printed Monographs (AACR 2.12–18)

In response to proposals from the CC:DA Task Force on Consistency across Part 1 of *AACR*, the Joint Steering Committee asked ALA to prepare a discussion paper on revisions to the rules for early printed monographs in Chapter 2. This discussion paper would aid the JSC members in consulting with their rare book cataloging communities.

For several reasons, this discussion paper can only begin to fulfill this assignment. It is still premature to present a specific set of revision proposals.

First, the Consistency Task Force is only about half way through its work, and has only examined the rules for edition (2.15) and publication information (2.16). Although it has made some recommendations regarding these rules, there are still many more rules to examine.

Second, the rare book community in the United States is in the process of revising *Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Books*, an interpretative manual published by the Library of Congress in 1991. This manual is widely used by special collections catalogers in the United States, is recommended for use by the rare book group in the UK, and is very likely used by rare book catalogers in Canada and Australia (although we have not been able to confirm this). The revision of *DCRB* should be allowed to influence any revisions to the special rules in Chapter 2. At this time, those revisions are still being completed; a draft for comment is expected to be circulated in December 2003 and a further draft produced early in 2004.

Finally, and most fundamentally, there are some prior questions that should occupy our attention before we can deal with specifics. Therefore, this discussion paper takes the form of an outline of these preliminary issues. It is hoped that this outline will allow JSC members to begin a discussion within their rare book communities.

**Question #1: Are the special rules for early printed monographs needed in AACR?**

In a sense, rules 2.12–18 are an exception to rule 0.1, which states that “these rules ... are not intended for specialist and archival libraries.” Such libraries are advised “to use the rules as the basis of their cataloguing and to augment their provisions as necessary.” The existence of documents such as the *International Standard Bibliographic Description for Older Monographic Publications (Antiquarian) — ISBD(A)* and *Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Books* seems to be in line with this provision. The inclusion of rules for such materials in AACR itself is somewhat exceptional.

The question might be rephrased: *Is there an audience for the rules for early printed monographs?* Are there catalogers who perhaps do not work in “specialist and archival libraries” but who find the general rules in chapter 2 (2.0–2.11) inadequate for describing rare materials? If so, in what ways are those rules inadequate and in what ways do they need to be supplemented?

**Question #2: What should be the scope of any special rules in Chapter 2?**

If there is an audience that needs rules that go beyond the general rules for monographs, but do not need the elaboration provided by a special code such as *DCRB*, what should be the scope of those rules?

The current rules 2.12–18 are limited to “the description of early books, pamphlets, and broadsides (for the most part, pre-nineteenth-century publications).” The rules in *Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Books* are stated to be “especially appropriate for such publications produced before the introduction of machine printing in the nineteenth century.” The Library of Congress applies *DCRB* “consistently to books published before 1801 ... while generally applying AACR 2 proper to later publications.”

However, one of the main thrusts of the revision of *DCRB* has been to extend its provisions to later materials, including those produced during the machine-press era. The benefits of rigorous attention to detail, exact transcription, and precise identification of individual manifestations (issues or even impressions or states), not to mention the careful recording of the unique features of individual copies, have been increasingly desired by catalogers describing machine-press books. The scope of the revised *DCRB* will be rare materials of whatever date, and will form part of a set of documents to be known collectively as *Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials*.

This desire comes primarily from the “specialist and archival libraries.” Is this sentiment general? Is the perceived need for special rules confined to hand-printed books? Or is there a more general desire for guidance in describing whatever materials have been identified as rare?

**Question #3: To what extent should any special rules in Chapter 2 conform to other rules?**

An effort has been made to make *DCRB* more or less compatible with *AACR*, and to the extent possible with *ISBD(A)*. If a special set of rules for rare books is included in Chapter 2, should it attempt to be an elaboration of *AACR* on the one hand and a condensation of *DCRB* on the other? How far should it go beyond the general provisions in 2.0–11?

**Question #4: What principles should inform any special rules for rare books? What specific topics need to be addressed? What rules in the current 2.12–18 need to be revised?**

It is perhaps premature to compile an exhaustive list of proposed revisions. However, suggestions from catalogers who perceive a need for such rules would be helpful in moving the revision forward. Perhaps a good place to start is with principles. The revision of *DCRB* has developed a draft set of objectives and principles, which is attached as an appendix to this document. Perhaps they might form part of the conversation with our respective cataloging communities.

**Addendum.** All of the questions being asked regarding the special rules for early printed monographs in this paper might be asked regarding the rules for manuscripts in Chapter 4. As with rare materials, most specialist and archival cataloging is based on rules for archival description such as *Archives, Personal Papers, and Manuscripts*, published by the Society of American Archivists. As with the rules for rare books, there is an increasing international dialogue on the rules for archival description, and there may be a convergence in the near future. The scope of Chapter 4 is also in question. Within *AACR*, it is used both as a chapter for describing individual manuscripts and collections of manuscripts, but also (in some specific cases such as the use of Area 4) as a set of rules for describing unpublished material. Beyond the current scope of *AACR*, it is arguable that the rules should cover a broader range of archival materials and be based to some extent on principles of archival organization and description. While this paper does not propose to begin a dialogue with the archival community, it does suggest that this initiative should be undertaken at an appropriate time in the future.

## DESCRIPTIVE CATALOGING OF RARE MATERIALS

### A Statement of Objectives and Principles

*This statement grows out of deliberations of the Bibliographic Standards Committee of the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section of the Association of College and Research Libraries and the work of a special conference on DCRM hosted by the Beinecke Library at Yale University, March 10-13, 2003.*

#### **Objectives for rare materials cataloging: meeting user requirements**

The primary objectives of rare materials cataloging are no different than the primary objectives of general cataloging. FRBR identifies those objectives as to meet user requirements to find, identify, select, and acquire/obtain materials. Although we share these objectives with all other cataloging, our users bring specialized needs to these tasks. In addition, some material that we describe, especially older material, does not conform to assumptions of standard production practices that lie behind general cataloging rules.

- 1) *Users shall be able to distinguish clearly between different manifestations of an expression or work.*

In general cataloging practice, one assumes that most manifestations readily distinguish themselves in the edition area and the publication, distribution, etc. area. In working with rare materials, these two areas are also critical to user tasks of identifying and selecting, but abbreviated transcription of information, especially in the publication, distribution, etc. area can impede these tasks. Additionally, information in the physical description and (where relevant) series areas may be critical when distinguishing manifestations. Transcriptions in the title and statement of responsibility area also provide information that distinguishes manifestations much more frequently than is routine in general materials. The two latter areas assume even greater importance in the absence of (or presence of minimal or misleading information in) either the edition area and/or the publication, distribution, etc. area. On occasion, further description in the note area of various anomalies serves to distinguish among otherwise unidentifiable manifestations. Any of these areas may also contribute at times to the ability of users to distinguish among exemplars at the item level.

- 2) *Users shall be able to perform most identification and selection tasks independently of direct access to the materials.*

Users of rare materials cataloging frequently perform identification and selection tasks under circumstances that require the bibliographic record to stand as a detailed surrogate for the item (e.g. consultation from a distance, limited access due to condition of item, inability to physically browse collections housed in restricted areas). Accuracy of bibliographic representation increases subsequent efficiency for both users and collection managers. The same accuracy contributes to the long-term preservation of the materials themselves, e.g. by

reducing unnecessary circulation of materials that do not specifically meet the user's requirements.

- 3) *Users shall be able to investigate physical processes and post-production history and context exemplified in materials described.*

Much of general cataloging assumes that users search within the work-expression-manifestation hierarchy. In contrast, users of rare materials routinely investigate a variety of artifactual or post-production intellectual aspects of materials that encompass a range of items or manifestations that are unrelated to each other as expressions or works. For example, they attempt to locate sets of materials related by printing methods, binding, provenance, etc. Additionally, users search for items by genre, whether physical or intellectual. Such access depends on full and accurate descriptions and corresponding access points.

- 4) *Users shall be able to access materials whose production or presentation characteristics deviate from modern conventions.*

General cataloging codes routinely distinguish between manifestations through reliance on explicit evidence presented in conventional form (e.g. a formal edition statement) that may be lacking or insufficient to distinguish among different manifestations in rare materials. In rare materials, that which is bibliographically significant is often unfamiliar to modern users.

### **Principles for rare materials cataloging rules**

Having identified several objectives of rare materials users, we want also to articulate working principles to guide the construction and revision of rules. Adherence to these principles in rule construction should facilitate meeting the user objectives. We derive these specific principles from reflection on the general principles of bibliographic description offered by Svenonius [*The Intellectual Foundation of Information Organization* (Cambridge/London: MIT Press, 2000)].

- a) *DCRM rules shall provide guidance for descriptions that allow users to distinguish clearly between different manifestations of an expression or work.*

This relates to user objective 1 stated above. It derives particularly from the general principle of user convenience and has implications throughout the descriptive record, especially in the edition and publication/distribution areas. The principle enables distinguishing among items as well as manifestations.

- b) *DCRM rules shall provide for accurate representations of the entity as it describes itself, notably through instructions regarding transcription, transposition, and omission.*

This relates to user objectives 2 and 4 stated above. It derives particularly from the general principles of representation (with its related subprinciple of accuracy) and of standardization. Precise representation is of particular relevance in the title and statement of responsibility area, the edition area, the publication, distribution, etc. area, and the series area, but should not be ignored in the physical description and note areas. Svenonius's statement on accuracy

(p. 71) is worth repeating in the context of DCRM: "A description is inaccurate if it in any way misrepresents an entity, making it seem what is not." The principles of representing material in the way in which it presents itself, and of presenting it in a standardized fashion, stand in greater tension with each other for rare materials than is the case with general materials. Faithfulness to both principles may require both descriptive and annotative treatment necessarily exceeding the norms (and at times the vocabulary) established as sufficient for description of general materials.

- c) *DCRM rules shall provide guidance for the inclusion of manifestation-specific and item-specific information that permits users to investigate physical process and post-production history and context exemplified in the item described.*

This relates to user objective 3 stated above. It derives particularly from the general principles of sufficiency and necessity and the related subprinciple of significance. Application of the principle requires that rare materials cataloging rules provide additional guidance on access points, particularly in cases where such information is not integral to the manifestation, expression or work described. Rules for item-specific information appearing in the note area may prescribe standard forms for presentation of information (addressing general principles of user convenience and common usage). Application of such rules presumes both a user's need for such information and a cataloger's ability to properly describe such aspects.

- d) *DCRM rules shall provide for the inclusion of all elements of bibliographical significance.*

This is related to all of the user objectives stated above. General cataloging rules routinely strive for both brevity and clarity, principles affiliated with the general principle of sufficiency. In describing rare materials, too great an emphasis on brevity may become the occasion for insufficiency and lack of clarity. In rare materials cataloging, brevity of description may be measured best against the functional requirements of the particular bibliographic record rather than against the average physical length of other bibliographic records in a given catalog or database. The tension between rules for rare materials that promote accurate representation of an item and yet do not exceed the requirements of sufficiency is great. Reference to the principle of user convenience may offer correct resolution of such tensions.

- e) *DCRM rules shall conform to the structure and language of the latest revision of AACR2 to the extent possible; ISBD shall serve as a secondary reference point for equivalent components of DCRM.*

This principle relates to general principles of both standardization and user convenience/common usage. We assume that users of rare materials cataloging also operate in contexts where AACR2 is a norm for general cataloging. In addition we note that the cataloging community within which DCRM is developing has a strong association with AACR2 as interpreted and applied by the Library of Congress. DCRM uses existing AACR2 vocabulary in a manner consistent with AACR2 usage/definition; use of additional or specialized vocabulary necessary for description and access of rare materials will occur in a clear and consistent manner in DCRM rules, appendices, and glossaries. DCRM shall not

introduce rules that are not required by differences expected between rare and general materials. Numbering of areas within DCRM will conform to the structure of ISBD as implemented in AACR2. When an existing AACR2 rule satisfies the requirements of cataloging rare materials, DCRM shall include AACR2 text verbatim (revising examples as useful for illustration). In cases where the language of AACR2 is not precise enough to cover necessary distinctions or may introduce confusion when dealing with rare materials, DCRM shall carefully consider alternate wording. Relevant components of ISBD are useful references when considering deviation.

- f) DCRM rules shall be compatible with relevant prior codes except in cases where changes are necessary to align more closely to current revisions of AACR2 or to conform to the above principles.*

This principle also relates to general principles of both standardization and user convenience/common usage. Changes to existing cataloging practices should not be made without careful consideration of the value or necessity of such changes.