

To: Prof. Lynne C. Howarth, Chair
Task Force on Guidelines for OPAC Displays
of the IFLA Division of Bibliographic Control

From: Mary Lynette Larsgaard, Chair
ALA/ALCTS/CCS Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access

Re: Comments on "Guidelines for OPAC Displays"

A Task Force of the American Library Association's Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access has reviewed "Guidelines for OPAC Displays," and the following comments have been approved by the Committee.

GENERAL COMMENTS

For the most part, the Task Force addressed only the 2003 draft document, as comparison to the 1998 version is not relevant to the charge. Worth noting is that the 1998 document was substantially longer and in particular included more examples of displays.

As with the first document, the Task Force recognized the value of attempting to write guidelines that will help software designers, system vendors, and library staff customizing the product to meet the needs of public users of online catalogs. There is some disappointment on the part of Task Force members that the latest draft, in trying to meet the needs of a wide international community, has lost its 'teeth' and therefore has less value to the communities for whom it is intended. It is recognized that the limits of cross-national standardization makes the goal of an all-purpose document difficult to achieve. It would be strengthened for all by more examples.

No area was specifically identified as not being in conformance with AARC2R. However, some display options do not take advantage of the cataloging code in ways that would support user review and interpretation of search results. ALA is concerned and disappointed over these missed opportunities.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS ON CONTENT

Contents

An organizational concern is that you cannot get from the contents page to the numbered sections. Perhaps this will be addressed with pagination. It would be helpful, also, if the contents page contained subheadings under Principles and

Recommendations as it does for the Introduction. The scope is not obvious from the contents. (The 1998 version was possibly too detailed in this regard).

Introduction

Within the section labeled Scope of the Guidelines, the paragraph beginning “The intent...,” sentence beginning “The goal for the displays recommended is ease of use, and providing...” seems to have two goals, and so should say “The goals ... are”

The section labeled Functions of the Catalogue should be expanded to mention that participants of the July 2003 IFLA Meeting of Experts on an International Cataloguing Code (IME ICC) have approved a final draft Statement of International Cataloguing Principles, posted online at:

http://www.ddb.de/news/pdf/statement_draft.pdf

All related documents are posted at: http://www.ddb.de/news/ifla_conf_papers.htm

In the Section labeled General Comments on the Guidelines, the paragraph beginning “Searching and browsing...” states that there can be 3 results: 1. bibliographic records, 2. authority records, or 3. a list from the index. Many catalogs display cross-references or messages that suggest alternative searches (e.g. in response to no matches). Perhaps option 3 could be reworded to something like: A list from the index or suggested alternative search options.

Principles

The Task Force had no comments for this area.

Recommendations

A. User Needs

- 1.4 There is a typo in the last paragraph (bgbof).
- 2.1 and 3 These sections seem to have more to do with indexing than display. “2.1 Enable users to locate and determine the documents wanted” seems inappropriate. A suggested rewording is “Design display so that it facilitates the process of locating and determining the document(s) wanted.” Section 3 might be more in scope if it said “... users so that they can recognize when they have found what they want...”
- 3.2 The typeface is inconsistent with other headings (too large). The third paragraph is confusing. It isn’t clear if this is referring to single record displays or sorting of multiple records or multiple headings. Examples could clarify the meaning.
- 4.3 It is unclear if the meaning is referring to the same record actually being recorded in two different languages (entire duplicate, equivalent records), or that there is a single record but an option to have associated labels, help cues, etc., display in a different

language. An example of what appear to be duplicate authority records was noted in the Canadian database, Amicus.

- 5.1 It is unclear what is meant by “Allow the user to choose the type of result for display.” It is unlikely a user would understand the question if asked to choose between bibliographic and authority records. If referring to display of a list brief entries over a list of full records, make this clearer. It is urged that here and at 5.3 systems build displays by drawing on both bibliographic and authority records. For example, a work heading index or a title index that included headings drawn from both bibliographic records (transcribed titled and titled added entries) and authority records (uniform titles and uniform title cross-references) is an extremely useful index in collections with many title main entries (e.g. motion pictures or computer files). It would be useful in serial collections, as well, particularly if there were more authority records for serials with collocating (not necessarily distinguishing) uniform titles, e.g., for translations and other types of related editions.

Also in this section and in subsequent ones that refer to “meaningful order,” the guidelines should point out the value of allowing a sort by work identifier in systems that support them (1xx if present plus 240 if present plus 245). Add “meaningful order at 5.1 bullet 4.

- 5.2 An example is needed to clarify the meaning of the second sentence in the second paragraph, “The level should correspond to the level of attributes given in the query.” In this context, by the way, it should be noted that the tables in which attributes are applied to entities in FRBR, referred to in the footnote, appear to be deeply flawed. Essentially, elements of the bibliographic description that are valuable for identifying works (title and statement of responsibility) and expressions (statements of subsidiary responsibility, edition statements, extent, illustration statements) are all linked only to manifestation in the FRBR tables, contradicting the examples of work and expression given in the FRBR text.
- 5.2 See comment in 5.1 about drawing on both bibliographic and authority records. Also, it would be helpful if “the minimal set of data required for the user to distinguish” were made explicit. Here, and at 5.5, explicitly recommend that a compact summary display, consisting of work identifier (as suggested for 5.1) and date, be made available by default when a search retrieves more than one bibliographic record. These recommendations waffle about too much to be of much use.
- 5.3 The section heading covers only one of the principles described in the text of the section. Perhaps divide into two sentences, with the second beginning “Also allow an option for the user to execute....”
- 5.8 There is no clear consensus about labeled displays. Many feel strongly that they lead to unnecessary clutter and confusing terminology, and that the ISBD-prescribed display is more concise and easier to understand. Given this lack of agreement, it

seems appropriate to give the user the option to choose a labeled or unlabeled display. Giving users the option to personalize their display, including selection of preferred elements and provision of context-sensitive help, would be a significant enhancement.

- 5.9 Again, change last sentence to give users the option of labeled or unlabeled displays for authority records.
- 5.11 An example of “displaying level by level” would make it easier to imagine what is meant here. It is unclear why this ends with “if appropriate.” Does this mean ‘if they occur?’
- 6.1 There is not universal agreement regarding ‘relevance ranking’ as a meaningful arrangement. Perhaps add a last sentence: The logic employed in the resulting sort should be readily apparent to the searcher.

Paragraphs 2 and 4 need examples regarding language and script, respectively. The recommendations are not understood as written.

- 6.2 The concept of work identifier as a sorting element is again suggested. Minimally, include it is an example in ‘e.g.’ list in the second paragraph.
- 6.3 It is suggested that a meaning for ‘brief displays’ be given. Does this refer only to brief bibliographic (or authority) records? Or does it refer to headings list, which are by nature brief?
- 6.4 The heading refers to ‘single record displays’ but the text does not, although it is implied. Perhaps rephrase: “As the default arrangement order for the display of *single records from a set...*”
- 7.1 This section should include mention of other record types that occur within public catalogs, such as holdings, check-in, and order information. Although the second paragraph of the scope of the guidelines specifies that they exclude ‘circulation, serials check-in, ... acquisitions’ information, these records are, to users, a seamless part of the OPAC display. To users, the catalog is not just bibliographic display and is taking on new roles, such as linking to journal articles through A&I services.

Appendix 1

Add reference to IME ICC Statement of International Cataloging Principles [as suggested for inclusion in the Introduction].

Bibliography

Add citation to Marcia Bates paper:

Marcia Bates, "Improving User Access to Library Catalog and Portal Information." Final report (version 3), June 1, 2003, for Task Force Recommendation 2.3 Research and Design Review, Library of Congress Bicentennial Conference on Bibliographic Control for the New Millennium.
<http://lcweb.loc.gov/catdir/bibcontrol/2.3BatesReport6-03.doc.pdf>

COMMENT ON OMISSIONS

There are some recommendations from the 1998 version of the guidelines that cannot be found and are seen as desirable to address (apply always or optionally):

1. Always display what was searched.
2. Emphasize the entity sought in the resultant display.
3. Highlight terms matched in some way.
4. Keep display, sorting and indexing independent; treat fields and subfields differently depending on what function is being invoked.
5. Respect indicator values in sorting (e.g., to skip articles in titles), production of display punctuation (e.g. dashes to separate subject heading main headings from subdivisions) and display constants (e.g. MARC 21's display constants for notes such as 'CREDITS:')
6. Employ logical compression (relate to existing example in appendix).
7. Avoid repetition; do not duplicate records (except if in multiple languages?)
8. Integrate cross-references in headings displays.
9. Avoid arbitrary truncation of headings and brief bibliographic records.
10. Works *about* a genre/form, and *examples of* a genre/form both be displayed but be segregated.
11. Classification displays allow ready navigation of classification hierarchies.
12. A logical sort for display of multiple bibliographic records be available (work identifier sort)
13. Within a single bibliographic record, retain the order of fields as set by the cataloger (Optional, except first subject heading? More important for non-book material, which carry little information that can be transcribed. AACR2R prescribes order for some notes, emphasizing cataloger judgment; the value of the judgment should be reflected in the display.
14. OPAC software supply/retain all punctuation, display constants and the like required by standards such as MARC21.

No attempt was made to specify where in the draft these should be added, if accepted for inclusion.

OTHER COMMENTS

There is mention of “hierarchical records” and “tree structures” but this concept should be expanded to the display of tree structures showing the history of a serial publication, with corresponding dates of publication, and then the capability to selected desired title(s) from the tree structure. This is considered an important element in displays for serials and may also be in displays for other formats as linking fields are used more frequently.

There also are no examples of difficult displays demonstrating serial publications, as in the 1998 version of the Guidelines. This is a very important display (sorting) concern.

[2B] BAD Display that does not follow the principle of sorting elements:

1. Health advocate.
2. Health alert.
3. Health (Canberra, Australia)
4. Health care costs.
5. Health care management review.
6. Health (Chicago, Ill.)
7. Health cost review.
8. Health (New York, N.Y. : 1981)
9. Health news.
10. Health reports.
11. Health (San Francisco, Calif.)

[2B] BETTER Display following the principle of sorting elements:

1. Health (Canberra, A.C.T.)
2. Health (Chicago, Ill.)
3. Health (New York, N.Y. : 1981)
4. Health (San Francisco, Calif.)
5. Health advocate.
6. Health alert.
7. Health care costs.
8. Health care management review.
9. Health cost review.
10. Health news.
11. Health reports.