

**TO:** Lynne Howarth

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

**RE:** Comments on “Guidance on the Structure, Content, and Application of Metadata Records for Digital Resources and Collections”

A Task Force of the American Library Association’s Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access has reviewed “Guidance on the Structure, Content, and Application of Metadata Records for Digital Resources and Collections,” and the following comments have been approved by the Committee. The IFLA Cataloguing Section Working Group on the Use of Metadata Schemas has created a useful and informative document. Thank you for considering CC:DA’s comments, and for your years of hard work in creating this useful document. The following comments are categorized by the Working Group’s own terms of reference.

***Objective 1: to create an inventory of the development and implementation/application of metadata schemas in different countries***

- CC:DA agrees that the task of creating such an inventory, or maintaining one, was not an attainable objective for this Working Group. Furthermore, there seems to be a good potential mechanism in place to perform this task in the IFLA “DIGITAL LIBRARIES: Metadata Resources” Web site at <http://www.ifla.org/II/metadata.htm> (cited on page 4 of the Working Group’s document). CC:DA suggests that the Working Group recommend in its report that this Web site be kept current by regional IFLA contributors appointed by IFLA to monitor major projects in their respective regions.
- CC:DA suggests that the report list some examples of, and URLs for, the “formal and well-maintained” metadata registries that are mentioned on page 5.

***Objective 2: to provide guidance (and ultimately, as appropriate, guidelines) to libraries as to when and/or how best to use metadata records and bibliographic records (catalogue records)***

- CC:DA agrees strongly that there is confusion in the bibliographic community about what the relationship is or should be between catalogue records and metadata records. If the Working Group wishes to draw a distinction between metadata records on the one hand and catalogue/bibliographic records on the other, we would like to see this document articulate at the beginning of the document what the distinction between the two is, or clarify the ground rules; also, the report should supply some examples (or even one example) of possible relationship scenarios between catalogue records and metadata records. One

common model for the relationship of metadata records and catalogue records is this:

- a library or museum or other repository creates a digital collection by scanning physical objects and making them available via the institution's Web site;
- each of the resulting digital objects is described by a metadata record, which may contain all or some of the following: descriptive, administrative, analytical, rights management, or technical/preservation metadata, and which is created according to metadata standards appropriate to that type of collection;
- these individual metadata records are either embedded in the digital collection Web site or stored in a database attached to it;
- the purpose of these individual metadata records is to facilitate searching/browsing/navigating within the digital collection;
- a catalogue record is then created in MARC bibliographic format and according to a descriptive cataloging standards such as *AACR2* to describe the entire digital collection, and is stored in the online catalog;
- that catalogue record contains a URL link to the digital collection, enabling an online catalogue user to find the record for the collection in the online catalog, go directly from that record to the digital collection, and then search/browse/navigate *within* the collection by means of the metadata records stored there.

This is, of course, only one possible scenario, and the details of a project involving catalogue records and metadata records might vary from this. But at least this gives some guidance on what the relationship between catalogue and metadata records *might* be, which might help dispel some of the confusion that now exists.

This document states that the Working Group feels that it is premature to assign guidelines on when to create a catalogue record and when to create a metadata record. It may not *ever* be appropriate to give such guidelines, given the very diverse scopes of digital collections and their users - but some kind of guidance, such as the possible scenario we have described here, might help clear up the confusion that now exists in the bibliographic community if it were included in the document. It is a very common scenario for metadata records to be created as surrogates for the digital objects within a digital collection, and then for a collection-level catalogue record to be created as a surrogate for the entire collection and as a means of transporting the online catalog user from the catalog

to a digital collection. It appears to us that this model is well established and that it would not be premature to mention this scenario by way of illustration.

One member of the Task Force suggested that the distinction between catalogue/bibliographic records and metadata records should not be made at all, that the distinction is not useful in that both seek to provide data associated with an “information object” for purposes of description, identification, access, and administrative/technical purposes. That member suggested that Objective 2 be restated as:

“To provide guidance to the library community on the nature and implementation of metadata schemes, including bibliographic or catalogue records, so that a project can evaluate and select which scheme will best match the goals of the project.”

- CC:DA suggests that the category “technical metadata” in section 2.1 be changed to “technical/preservation metadata.” We suggest this because the term “preservation metadata” is already well established as a descriptor for the type of metadata listed here.

***Objective 3: to determine a metadata “core record” - i.e., a set of most commonly occurring elements in selected metadata schemas - that could be used by authors and/or publishers of electronic records to enhance resource discovery, and to provide, where appropriate, elements for incorporation into bibliographic records (catalogue records)***

- CC:DA appreciates the time and effort that went into the creation of this core set of elements and its definitions, but some of us question whether this objective should be pursued by the IFLA Working Group at all. Since librarians are already active participants in the ongoing development of many of the metadata schemas noted in this section, the best way to accomplish the aims of Objective 3 would be through the development of a “library application profile”<sup>1</sup> *specific to any* metadata schema that a library might choose to employ, rather than a general across-the-board set of elements meant to apply to any metadata schema. We believe that the librarians who are currently participating in the development of metadata schemas of interest to libraries are already very conscious of the needs of library catalogue users, and will select elements that fulfill the FRBR objectives. There are others of us who perceive that since the objective appears to be to have a core record general enough to be used by communities outside of the library but that would still be usable by libraries, we would need specific profiles to reference an agreed-upon core standard.

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<sup>1</sup> This terminology comes from the Dublin Core Metadata initiative, where such a profile has been developed.

Not all digital projects undertaken by the library are “bibliographic” in nature, and it is therefore possible, we feel, that a very valid library application of one of the metadata schema listed in this section might not include all ten of these elements, but would still fulfill all of the four FRBR objectives. For example, one of the required elements in the core is “language.” This makes no sense if the content is mathematical or otherwise non-linguistic in nature (as is often the case in visual art, photography, and other cultural objects). Not surprisingly, the VRA, CIMI and EAD standards did not contain all the core elements -- however, these metadata schemas would be the appropriate choice for certain library projects.

That is our position on this objective (we oppose the idea of an IFLA-sponsored set of core elements such as this, for the reasons stated above), but we also offer the following comments on the way this section is written.

- CC:DA notes that while the document states in section 3.1 that the Working Group “concurred that it would be useful to make recommendations as to which elements would be mandatory versus optional for both electronic serial and integrating resources and monographic resources,” such recommendations do not appear in this document.

Further, CC:DA questions whether it is appropriate to introduce the concepts of “serial and integrating resources” and “monographic resources” in a document such as this. These concepts are long-established in the cataloging tradition, but do not seem as readily applicable or necessary in metadata creation, and could cause confusion among would-be creators of core records who are not cataloguers.

- CC:DA suggests that that the following phrase in the last paragraph on page 13:

“regardless of which metadata scheme is being used to encode or markup an electronic resource, ...”

should be changed to:

“regardless of which metadata scheme is being used to ~~encode or markup~~ describe an electronic resource, ...”

We also note that the closing quotation mark (which should be after the question mark after “object” on the first line of page 14) is missing in this sentence.

- There is some disagreement amongst CC:DA members as to whether or not the default definition of “date” in the core set of metadata (p. 16) should not be “year.” Some perceive that a more detailed date (e.g., one that includes year, month, and date, as defined in *Date and Time Formats*, a profile of ISO 8601,<sup>2</sup> is

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<sup>2</sup> *Date and Time Formats*. See <http://www.w3.org/TR/NOTE-datetime>

likely to be of more use in metadata applications than a year alone; another opinion is that catalog records currently use a combination of year and version (which seems to work) and that catalog records are traditionally not updated as frequently or to the extent that metadata records are. (Hours, minutes, and seconds might even be appropriate in some metadata applications.) We suggest that the first sentence of this definition be changed from:

“Indicates the particular year and may, as appropriate, include a month and/or day associated with the work.”

to:

“Indicates the date/time associated with the work, expressed in a level of granularity appropriate to the resource, and constructed in compliance with ISO 8601.”

We also note that there is an extra full stop at the end of this sentence which should be deleted.

- Some CC:DA perceive that the final sentence in the definition of “Name assigned to the resource” should be deleted. I.e.:

~~Schemas describing artistic works and images (VRA and CIMI) also include the names of complex works or series and the discrete units within these larger entities (e.g., a print from a series, a panel from a fresco, a building within a temple complex), or may identify only the larger entity itself.~~

- What is the meaning of the bulleted item #4 on page 18: “Creating a “common language bibliographic record” with a “common core record”?”
- Regarding the chart in Appendix 1, there is such thing as a resource identifier that could aid in the selection of a resource (not only in the identification, finding, and obtaining of the resource).