

To: Lynne Howarth, Chair, ISBD Study Group on Treatment of Publications in Multiple Formats

From: Kristin Lindlan, Chair, ALA/ALCTS/CCS Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access

RE: ALA Response to the ISBD Review Group's Proposals on Treatments of Publications in Multiple Formats

Background

The ISBD Review Group, "recognizing the increasing incidence of resources published in more than one physical medium, and the challenges that these publications pose for bibliographic control," has come up with a short set of proposals to address "(1) the use of multiple ISBDs and the use of multiple general material designations ([gmd's]), (2) the order in which elements for multiple formats should be treated, and (3) the number of bibliographic records to be created for multiple versions."

The proposals deal with two distinct situations: (1) a single manifestation which has characteristics relevant to more than one ISBD — for example, electronic maps, whose content is covered by ISBD(CM) and whose carrier is covered by ISBD(ER); and (2) multiple manifestations of the same expression of the same work in different physical formats. Most of the proposed changes address the first situation, with only a very general permissive statement on the question of whether separate records are needed for multiple manifestations. In neither case do the proposed changes make any significant contribution to solving the problem.

ALA has four general recommendations and a number of specific comments.

A. Single manifestation with multiple characteristics

In general, it is disappointing that this set of proposals fails to make use of the terminology and concepts in the *Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records*. The description of the issues in the second paragraph above is an example of the use of FRBR terminology to describe the issues involved here. FRBR terminology could be used more widely in the ISBDs themselves and in the proposals coming out of the ISBD review process to lend precision and conceptual depth to these documents. **Recommendation #1: ALA recommends that the ISBD Review Group move promptly to incorporate FRBR terminology into the ISBDs in general.**

Both the general material designations and the scope of the different ISBDs were based on pragmatic, traditional bibliographic categories. These categories were never mutually exclusive or based on a single set of taxonomic distinctions. The description of the origin of the list of general material designations by Jean Weihs, who was instrumental in compiling the first list, clearly demonstrates that there were no coherent principles involved. Jean's recent research also

indicates the extent to which the current GMDs, while still matching many of the resources that exist in library collections, fail to fit an increasing number of “hybrid” categories — the most significant of which are electronic manifestations. Tom Delsey’s analysis of the related concept of “class of materials” in the *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules* similarly documents the extent to which these traditional categories lack both logical consistency and the flexibility to handle new media.

In its deliberations on these issues, the Joint Steering Committee for Revision of AACR has sought an alternative approach that would lend a more logical and flexible structure to the ways in which we categorize resources. They believe that the most fruitful approach is in fact suggested in the *Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records*. One of the attributes of an expression is *form of expression* (4.3.2), defined as “the means by which the work is realized (e.g., through alpha-numeric notation, musical notation, spoken word, musical sound, cartographic image, photographic image, sculpture, dance, mine, etc.).” They are working on the idea that the *general material designation* should identify the *form of expression* and that the *specific material designation* should identify the *form of manifestation*. If this were done, it is much less likely that more than one GMD would be applicable; the distinction between form of expression and form of manifestation could also help structure the scope of future ISBDs and provide techniques for deciding how to apply multiple ISBDs in describing a given manifestation. **Recommendation #2: ALA recommends that the ISBD Review Group give serious consideration to undertaking a conceptual review of the GMD and SMD using the FRBR concepts of *form of expression* and *form of manifestation*.**

Additionally, we are convinced that having the GMD follow the title proper in Area 1 of the description is the wrong place. We suspect that this data element should be independent of any of the existing areas of the description. This is particularly important given that the display of information in an OPAC or other output format is independent of the location of the data within the bibliographic record. The specific location within the record — so long as it is explicitly designated in the MARC record — need not affect the display of the information.

We are not convinced that repeating the GMD is the appropriate means for dealing with multiple formats. It is unclear whether the repeated GMD is intended to be used for both the single “hybrid” manifestation situation and for the multiple manifestation situation. It is certainly true that users will not immediately understand which situation applies. In general, we think that the repeated GMD should be confined to the single manifestation case, and that multiple manifestations should be treated either in separate bibliographic records (see section B below) or as holdings information.

Although the text at 0.1.3 indicates that areas and elements may be repeated as necessary, the only case in which this is actually shown is the GMD. It is unclear under what circumstances other elements would be repeated, but (particularly in the case of multiple manifestations), it is likely that the ability of the description to support identification of a given manifestation could be compromised by too much repetition of data from different sources. And there are some elements, like the title proper, which should not be repeated.

To summarize, the proposal does not solve or even address the problem of single manifestations with characteristics covered by multiple ISBDs. There needs to be a fundamental rethinking of the way in which resources are sorted into categories in the ISBDs, including a reconsideration of the “class of materials” concept. This rethinking should take advantage of the conceptual tools provided in the FRBR model and should aim to produce a principled set of categories that can be easily extended to cover new types of material. **Recommendation #3: ALA recommends that the ISBD Review Group undertake a general reconsideration of the *class of materials* concept and develop a new, principled set of categories.**

B. Multiple manifestations of the same expression of the same work

We think that the proposed text giving permission to cataloguing agencies to make their own policies does not accomplish anything, other than assuring that any decision will be compatible with the ISBD. Thus it makes such compatibility meaningless.

We understand the pressures of workload and other local conditions, which makes it expensive to provide separate descriptions of each manifestation. However, we believe that description at the manifestation level is the only approach which supports all of the user tasks and the goal of bibliographical control. We suggest that this should be the standard embodied in the ISBDs. There will always be bibliographic descriptions that do not meet this standard because of local conditions; however, in a shared cataloguing environment, the burden of manifestation-level descriptions does not have to be borne by any one agency.

That said, we do not argue that every manifestation with distinct characteristics needs a separate description. There should be an internationally-agreed set of guidelines on what differences between manifestations require a separate description. **Recommendation #4: ALA recommends that the ISBD Review Group develop guidelines on what differences between manifestations require a separate description.**

C. Comments on Specific Issues in the Document

1. The use of multiple ISBDs and the use of multiple general material designations (GMDs)

The first proposal seems to be similar to AACR2 revised rule 0.24, which calls for describing all relevant aspects of an item, except that the proposal formalizes the order of elements.

The outcomes of multiple GMDs could be troublesome, in that the present GMDs are an inconsistent mix of content/carrier terms, and IFLA assumes we will be using those GMDs in combination. Examples of GMDs: a serially issued digital map would have [map & electronic resource]; an electronic continuing resource: [electronic text]. The use of multiple GMDs in itself might be confusing for a patron when confronted with

something like: [map & electronic resource]. Other areas of the record such as notes can usefully indicate other format aspects of an item.

In addition, the SMD could also be used to indicate multiple formats, but it pushes the same issues further down the record. Specific details about format holdings have to be in the item record, since the MARC/AACR/ISBD record is essentially designed for describing one manifestation. Consistency may not be possible in the way that different libraries decide what an item's predominant feature/format is.

The use of an ampersand between the GMDs was not acceptable to many of the ALA reviewers. An ampersand might be subject to misinterpretation as indicative of two or more separate entities; a plus sign (+) might be clearer. However, a plus sign could be more confusing due to its current use in describing accompanying material. A survey of CC:DA members and representatives favored (a) use of a slash without spaces to separate applicable GMDs — “[cartographic material/electronic resource]” — or (b) a compound GMD consisting of the GMD for the content, followed by the GMD for the carrier in parentheses — “[cartographic material (electronic resource)]”.

Multiple GMDs could be useful in that they would give the patron a “heads up” that they are looking at multiple format holdings in the library. The example of Michigan State University catalog was given (the search under “Atlantic Monthly” at: <http://magic.lib.msu.edu>)

2. The order in which elements for multiple formats should be treated

In contrast to AACR2 0.24, this proposal formalizes the order of elements.

The proposal seems logical, if not completely clear with respect to the physical carrier, since a publication such as an electronic continuing resource could possess physical aspects, but not a physical carrier.

3. The number of bibliographic records to be created for multiple versions

It is unclear whether the use of multiple GMDs is intended in the case of multiple manifestations in different formats. While the multiple GMD may be meaningful in the case of a single manifestation with multiple characteristics, in the case of multiple manifestations, the item sought is *either* one *or* the other, and the ampersand is therefore misleading. If a single record is to be used to describe more than one manifestation (which ALA opposes on principle), then the differences would best be treated as holdings information.

It is also unclear how useful the assignment of multiple GMDs would be for the purpose of identification, since in typical cases, such as an electronic publication on the Web and on CD-ROM, the GMDs would be identical.